Living Sermons

A MESSAGE BY PASTOR MARCOS ANDRÉS NEHODA

IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO GOD

Isaiah Chapter 1

ISAIAH 1:1-31

"We want a revival in the church,
but we do not want to let go of sin."

PASTOR MARCOS ANDRÉS NEHODA

Evangelical Christian Church "God First," Sarandí, Buenos Aires • October 18, 2026

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It Is Time to Return to God: Isaiah Chapter 1

Preacher: Pastor Marcos Andrés Nehoda

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English edition, translated from the original Spanish

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This English edition is a translation of the original Spanish message, *Es hora de volver a Dios: Isaías capítulo 1*, preached on October 18, 2026. The preacher read from the Spanish Reina-Valera 1960 Bible.

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FOREWORD

Can a believer keep attending the services and reading the Bible while his heart drifts away from God? That is the question Pastor Marcos Andrés Nehoda sets before his congregation in Sarandí, in the province of Buenos Aires, in this message on the first chapter of Isaiah, preached on October 18, 2026.

Verse by verse, the pastor walks through God's charge against a religious people who had forsaken Him: children who rebelled, sacrifices God no longer wanted, hands raised in worship and hands full of blood. With simple stories—the monkey who would not let go of the nuts, the believer with a double life on the banks of the Paraná River, the refiner who purifies the silver until he sees his own face in it—he shows the danger of accepting sin as something normal.

The tone is frank and direct, and at the same time full of hope: God makes no pacts with sin, but He promises that sins red as scarlet can become white as snow.

This edition was prepared from the transcript of the live message and translated from the Spanish. The preacher's words, order and voice have been preserved; only time stamps, fillers and unnecessary repetitions have been removed, punctuation has been corrected, and chapters and subheadings have been added.

Read it slowly, with an open heart. As he himself says at the close: it is time to return to God.

Wisdom Epsi
- The Chief Editor, LivingSermons.com

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This book is a faithful transcript of a live sermon delivered by the preacher under the inspiration and unction of the Holy Spirit. Every effort has been made to preserve the preacher's exact words, tone, flow, and spiritual authority, while carefully proofreading and formatting the message into a clear and readable ebook format.

The message you are about to read was originally ministered in a live congregational setting. As such, it carries the weight, urgency, and atmosphere of that sacred gathering. Minor grammatical and structural adjustments have been made solely to enhance readability, without altering the substance, intent, or power of the original delivery.

Watch the live sermon from which this message was transcribed on YouTube, **at *the Church's Official YouTube Channel***

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MAIN MESSAGE

Begins Here

CHAPTER ONE

FAITHFUL OUTSIDE, FAR AWAY INSIDE

God does not want us to serve Him out of fear, but out of love.

TWO PROPHETS, ONE SAME SORROW

ISAIAH, CHAPTER 1. We have begun with Jeremiah; but, chronologically, Isaiah lived many years before Jeremiah. And the two of them had very similar things, because both of them, humanly speaking, failed, because they did not manage to get the people of God to turn back to God with all their heart.

As we have read in the Acts of the Apostles—we did not plan it, but that is how it turned out—it says that in their hearts they turned back to Egypt; that is, they were in the wilderness, but in their hearts they went back to the old life. And in the same way, we can be here for years, perhaps, and it may seem as though we are still faithful; but in our hearts we could be drifting away from God.

"DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD"

It is interesting what the apostle John says when he says: "Do not love the world." He does not say directly: "Do not go off into the world, into worldly things." He says: "Do not love the world." That is, one can be here, but in one's heart be loving the world: "What a drag! What a pity that I am a Christian, because how I would like to be at such-and-such a place right now, having fun in a dance hall, who knows! But

what can you do? I have to be here, because I want to open my eyes in heaven and not in hell."

So people have that line of reasoning; but God does not want us to serve Him out of fear. Yes, that we have a reverent fear, which is something else; but God does not want us to serve Him out of fear, but out of love.

THE CHURCH HAS TO BE CONVERTED TO CHRIST

And, humanly speaking—I repeat—these two prophets failed in their attempt to get the people of God to return to God. "How strange: what, the people of God have to return to God?" Yes, yes: incredible. But, as a preacher used to say, the church has to be converted to Christ. The church is supposed to be made up of people converted to Christ; but well, many times that is how it is.

So Isaiah preached long before Jeremiah. And here it says, chapter 1, verse 1:

> **ISAIAH 1:1-31**
>
> *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*
>
> *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*
>
> *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: 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 putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers*

devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 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. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

> *Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: and I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*

CHAPTER TWO

WOE IS ME!

The closer we draw to God, the dirtier we seem to be.

A PROLOGUE TO THE WHOLE PROPHECY

TRULY, THIS CHAPTER is like an introduction, a prologue to the whole prophecy of Isaiah. Because, if we get down to it, the prophecy—or the story that Isaiah tells—theoretically ought to begin in chapter 6, where Isaiah has a vision of the holiness of God, of the magnificence of the Lord. He realizes that serving God is not just any old thing; he realizes that he is believing in the One who is the Creator of the whole universe.

And sometimes we come to the services and it seems to us—of course, since we always come—that this is our house, that we have a familiarity with the Lord, and that it is fine. But we ought to cry out like the apostle Paul: "Woe is me!" And we ought to cry out as Isaiah cried out: "Woe is me!"

PRAYER, HOLINESS AND SERVICE

When did he cry out, "Woe is me!"? When he saw the presence of God, saw the magnificence of the Lord in that vision he had. He saw the glory of God, and he saw those seraphim, those angelic beings that had not two wings, but three pairs of wings. It says that, within the magnificence of the glory of the LORD, with one pair of wings they covered their eyes, with another pair of wings they covered their feet, and with the third pair of wings they flew.

And this speaks to us of the reverence we must have toward the Lord, covering our eyes, and of the care we must have in our daily life in covering our feet: where we walk, how we live as Christians. And only then, with the other two wings, can one fly; that is, serve God. Look how interesting that is, isn't it? So: prayer, holiness and service.

A RAY OF SUNLIGHT IN THE ROOM

And when he had that vision, he said: "Woe is me!" And then one of the seraphim came, took a coal from the altar, which was burning, and touched the lips of the prophet Isaiah, because he had said: "Woe, I am a man of unclean lips!" One says: "What? Did Isaiah use bad language? Was he a worldly man?" No; but before the holiness of God he truly saw how he was.

I do not know whether it happens to you that, the closer we draw to God, the dirtier we seem to be. One says: "But how can that be? If I draw closer to the Lord, I ought to be cleaner and cleaner." Of course, and that is how it is: every time you draw closer to the Lord, you are cleaner; but since you are drawing closer and closer to the Lord, you feel dirtier, because you are seeing more clearly the things that before you did not realize were wrong.

It is as if we now look at this whole room, and it seemed that everything was clean; but if we let in a ray of sunlight—it will have happened to you in your homes—you will see that, along that little path of the ray of sunlight, there are lots of little specks of dirt that one does not normally see. That is what happens to us as we draw closer and closer to the Lord. We have grown, we have achieved many things with the Lord's help; but, on seeing the holiness of God, we realize: "Well, this is nothing; I still have a long way to go to please the Lord more and more."

"HERE I AM, LORD"

You know that when he had that vision, and the angel touched his lips with that burning coal, after that he was able to hear—it says so very plainly in the prophecy, in chapter 6—the voice of God, saying: "Whom can We send in Our place, to give the message to the world, to the people of God?" First of all, Isaiah said: "Well, here I am. Here I am, Lord. I am willing." And, you know, God used him.

And well, that is how the prophecy historically begins. But here, in practice, we see that he placed this chapter 1 as a prologue, and also as a summary of everything he is going to deal with in all those chapters, those 66 chapters.

And here it says: "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." Something terrible had already happened to the northern country, and he was in the southern country. In the division of Israel—the north and the south—he was in the southern part; that is why it says that he saw this prophecy, this vision, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

CHAPTER THREE

I BROUGHT UP CHILDREN

It is not about knowing what is in it, but about God speaking to us.

CHILDREN WHO REBELLED

THEN IT SAYS: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken." We have to listen, because God is speaking, right? And it says: "I have nourished and brought up children." "I brought up children and made them great. I gave them the best, I made them great, and they rebelled against Me."

LIKE A TEENAGER

But when one—today we were talking about it with a sister before the service—when one has only just come to know the Lord, one is humble, because one knows practically nothing. So one listens to what one is taught: "Look, this is how it is." "Ah, of course, of course." "This is how it is: you need to come to the services ten or fifteen minutes early, so you can pray, meditate." "Ah, how good, how good." "And you need to bring some offering to God, a voluntary one; naturally, because that is also necessary." Ah… One is learning everything. And afterward they explain to you that, when one has truly come to know Christ, one asks to be baptized, which is a step of obedience to God. "Ah, how fine." And one receives all of that with joy, and feels it is a blessing to learn all this.

But as the years go by, it is like children who become teenagers. You say to him: "Son, such-and-such." "And why?" "But, son, it's that…" "No, no. So what? So what? So what? Now, because you said it that way, I am going to do it the other way." "But what reason is there?"

Well, that is what sometimes happens in the congregation. When one belongs to the Lord and some years have gone by, one starts acting like a teenager: "And why this? And why that? No, I'll do the opposite." "Oh, come on… What's the big deal?" "And why yes? Why this way? Why that way?"

BECOMING AGAIN THE ONE WHO LEARNED

How we need to go back in our minds! To say: "What was I like when I came to know the Lord? I was so humble, so eager to learn. Before, I used to consult, to ask; now I do not want to ask anymore. The Bible… Why do I have to be reading the Bible all the time? I already know it; I already know the things that are in the Bible." But it is not about knowing what is in it, but about God speaking to us, speaking to us, speaking to us.

Look, I have been reading the Bible since I was twelve years old. I began to read it from the age of twelve, getting up at six in the morning, and never, not a single day, have I stopped reading the Bible. And you think I know the Bible by heart, don't you? Every time, I am more aware of how little I know of the Bible. And now that I am older, that I am forgetting the Bible references, the numbers, the names, I am more and more aware of it. So I have to meditate even more on the Word of God.

EXAMINE YOUR HEART

It says: "I have nourished and brought up children." I gave them the best, "and they have rebelled against me." Examine your heart, to see whether there is any rebellion in you toward the Lord. Any rebellion. If one stops to observe, to look carefully… There are things that I know very well I ought to do, because I know, I know the will

of God, but I am not doing it. So that is rebellion. If God tells you to do it, and you can do it, then we have to examine it.

THE OX KNOWS HIS OWNER

It says: the ox, an animal, knows his owner, and the donkey knows his master's crib. I have a video where there is a group of people, and far off there is a flock of sheep. So they try calling them, to see if they will come. One calls them one way, another calls them another way. The sheep pay no attention. But then the owner of the sheep appears and, when he calls them, they all come, the whole lot of them.

Here it says: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

CHAPTER FOUR

A CONSISTENT LIFE

There has to be a life that backs up the whole profession of faith we say we have.

A CONTRADICTION?

WELL, NOW IS the time to clarify once again what seems to some to be a contradiction. You sometimes hear me say: "Brethren, we have to read the Bible every day, we have to pray every day, we have to attend every service, we have to arrive on time, we have to testify of the Lord." Everyone says: "Yes, that's true." Yes.

Then, another Sunday, I come and say to you: "You can read the Bible every day, attend every service, come on time; but if in your heart you are loving the world, it does you no good to come to the services and to read the Bible." They say: "But how does he contradict himself? On the one hand, that it is good to read the Bible and attend the services, and then he says it is of no use."

Because they are two things that do not contradict each other, sisters and brothers. It is necessary to attend the services, it is necessary to read the Word of God, it is necessary to testify of the Lord; but there has to be a life consistent with that Christian profession that I say I have.

ON CREDIT AT THE CORNER STORE

If I attend every service, I do very well. But what happens if I attend every service and I owe half the world, and I do not pay my debts, and I am buying on credit at

the corner store and I do not pay the storekeeper? Do you see? There is a contradiction there. That really is a contradiction.

Is it important to read the Bible? Of course it is. Is it important to pray? Yes. Is it important to attend the services? Of course it is. Is it important to testify? Yes. Yes. They are basic things; but there has to be a consistent life, a life that backs up the whole profession of faith we say we have.

NO KNOWLEDGE

That is why you see here that the people have no knowledge, they do not understand. There was a defect there in the reading of the Word of God, in hearing the Word of God. I do not know; of course, not all the books of the Bible were there yet; there was a part of the Old Testament, because you see here that, at this point, the prophecy of Isaiah was not yet complete. So... But they do not understand, and they have no knowledge.

It is not only reading the Bible: "Ah, yes, I read it. I have already read two chapters; I am fine with the Lord now." No; but rather: "What does the Lord want to tell me?" That is why it is so important that I pray before reading the Bible, and I must have a devotional time. It is good to do it with the family, there is no problem with that; that is very lovely. But with the Lord, I all by myself with the Lord: it is God the Father, the Holy Bible and me. That trio that no one else can enter.

GOD, THE BIBLE AND ME

I am face to face with my Lord and with His Word, and God is going to tell me things that perhaps I cannot share with others. But God is going to tell me: "Here you are doing wrong; in this you are doing wrong; in this you are doing well, and stand firm, because you are in the right. Do not let yourself be led astray." So these are things that God goes on working in our life. And since our heart tends to drift away from

God, tends to stay behind along the way, every day God awakens us with His holy Word.

I tell you sincerely: I do not dare go out to do anything outside my home if I have not first read the Word of God, because perhaps God wants to warn me about something, wants to alert me about something. And it is important to pray to the Lord.

WITH A PENCIL IN HAND

And if necessary, look: you take a pencil and you mark how far you read. Because one says: "Yes, I'll remember." No, afterward you forget; because, since you have read the Bible before, you get confused: "Here—did I read it or not?" So you put an X, a little line, right? You underline those things in which God spoke to you, and you check: "Let's see, Lord, what things do I have here to put into practice?" Because it is not only about reading and being informed, but about what things I can put into practice.

For example, one reads in Proverbs: "A soft answer turneth away wrath." But if you answer an angry person angrily too, there is trouble, isn't there? So these are things that God goes on teaching you. It says that the wise man likes to learn: "The wise man listens, learns, and will increase his learning." But the fool, the foolish one, says: "Ah, I already know everything. What? I don't need to listen to anything else."

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN WE ACCEPT SIN

We must never accept sin in our life as something habitual and normal.

SINFUL PEOPLE

WELL, BUT THEN verse 4 says: "Ah sinful nation!" How strong is what God says! "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity!" Notice, people: what is it to be a sinful person? A person who knows what is wrong, but keeps on doing it. He knows that it does not please God, but he keeps on doing it.

"A MAN HAS TO MAKE A LIVING"

You know that there is a very great danger when, instead of renouncing sin, instead of declaring "that is wrong," one begins to accept it, begins to treat it as something normal. When one accepts sin, it settles in, and it sticks to your heart, and it is very, very hard to get it out, that sin. That is why we must never accept sin in our life as something habitual and normal.

"Well, what can you do? We are sinners. And well, what can you do? I have to make a living somehow. I buy cell phones that have been stolen. So I buy them from a person who I know steals, or who buys them from other thieves, and I sell them cheap, and I do people a good turn; because imagine, things are bad economically: who can buy a new cell phone? But I give them a practically new phone at half price, even less than half. So I help a person out, and I help myself out too." But that

is wrong. You are selling stolen merchandise. “Well, what can you do? A man has to make a living somehow.” There you are accepting sin as something normal. And there it sticks to you, it gets welded into your heart. Go and try to get it out afterward! Only the power of God can, right?

ALWAYS WATCHFUL

That is why we must always be watchful, watchful, watchful. The first time one sins: “Oh, I cannot sleep at night because of what I did!” Then he does it a second time, and says: “Well, what can you do? I was tempted again.” That day he already sleeps a little better. And afterward he does it as if it were nothing, and sleeps as peacefully as can be.

There was a man who was driving his car along a road. He was going along as calm as can be, paying no attention to anything. And a man says to him: “Watch out for the cliff!” And the man said: “What cliff?” He went right over, because he did not pay attention, brethren. Perhaps this did not happen in real life—although I have seen videos of cars that have gone over a cliff—but when we do not give sin the importance we ought to give it, that is when we deceive ourselves.

I know that it is not very pleasant, not much fun, to talk about these things; but imagine: if I can save a driver from going over the edge of a cliff, that is a great thing.

HEAVY LADEN

Here it says: “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity!” That is, one carries sin like a load. So I invite you to go to the cross of Christ, to go to Jesus, who died on the cross of Calvary, to leave your burdens there, because the Lord says: “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

A SEED OF EVILDOERS

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers!" Do you see? It is no longer only you personally; you have taught your children to live the same way you are living. If I am a mediocre Christian, what will my children be like? Mediocre. And if my mediocre children later marry and have children, what will my grandchildren be like, if my children are mediocre too? Because they learned from me, and I am mediocre.

Then it says: "a seed of evildoers"—my goodness!—"children that are corrupters." Do you know what depraved means? That they have no shame: shamelessly they do what they do, and there is inside a wickedness, a depravity, a baseness, right? A degeneracy.

THEY HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD

"They have forsaken the LORD." There is the key. They forsook the LORD. They forsook the Lord, and they also provoked Him to anger. When do we provoke the Lord to anger? Well… when we, who know the truth, keep doing what we know is wrong and does not please God. Then we provoke Him to anger. "They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." That is, instead of progressing, of going forward, they began to go backward.

Examine your heart, as I examined mine. As Hebrews says: watch out, let us be careful, lest we slip away. What does it mean to slip away? Little by little, little by little you are slackening, you are accepting sin, you are getting used to sin; but you keep coming to the services, you keep reading the Bible religiously—which is not wrong; it is very good—but there is no life that matches what you are doing in coming to the services, in reading the Bible, right?

CHAPTER SIX

GOD MAKES NO PACTS WITH SIN

We want a revival in the church, but we do not want to let go of sin.

A WARNING

BUT THERE IS a warning: "Why should ye be stricken any more?" That is, a punishment is coming. How long is God going to put up with our life of sin? "But I belong to the Lord. I have Jesus in my heart, and I read the Bible, I attend the services." Yes, yes, yes, yes. But God makes no pacts with sin; He makes no deals with sin: "Look, if you give such-and-such an amount of money to the church, I, God, will turn a blind eye to that sin. Don't worry about it."

Look: God is holy. In the vision that Isaiah saw, they were saying: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." And the pillars of the temple, the doorposts of the temple, moved, shook, trembled before the presence of God.

THE WHOLE HEAD IS SICK

"Ye will revolt more and more." And we also use this to preach the gospel to people who do not know the Lord; what comes next: "The whole head is sick." It does not mean that everyone is crazy, but that there is so much sin in here, so many things, so many problems, so many worries that one has not gone to the Lord to hand over

to Him. It says the head is sick. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," even though you smile and it seems that everything is fine.

"From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it"—in that person—"but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores." To us Argentines it sounds stronger when we say it the other way round: wounds, bruises, and sores putrifying. It sounds stronger, I do not know why. But that my being, my inner spiritual life, should be a putrid, swollen sore!

That wound, it says… Those wounds "have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO GOD

It is time to return to God. A preacher used to say: "It is time to return to God." They were saying it to the unconverted. There I would say: "It is time to come to God." But to those of us who already belong to Him: it is time to return to God. We want a revival in the church, but we do not want to let go of sin.

HOW TO CATCH A MONKEY

I have told this before; but since it has been a while since I told it, I will tell it again. Surely some have never heard it. How do they catch monkeys in Africa? Because monkeys are very, very fast. Yes, you can kill them with one shot, but you want to catch them alive. Very simple.

In a little tin can they put nuts, because monkeys love nuts. And in the lid they make a little hole, just big enough for the little monkey's little hand to go in. They keep the can securely chained to a tree, right?, so that he cannot carry the can away. Then the little monkey, who is very curious and has a good sense of smell, looks around and says: "Something smells good around here." Yes, there, in that little can. "What could there be in there? Look: nuts, wow!" And he puts his little hand in.

When he puts his hand in, along comes the hunter to grab him. And you will say: "But what a foolish little monkey! Just as you put your hand in, pull it out." No; but he put his hand in and grabbed the nuts. And the hunter comes, but he does not want to let go of the nuts. He knows that, if he does this, his hand gets small and he can pull it out: just as he put it in, he can take it out. But, holding so many nuts, he makes a thick fist and cannot get it out. And he sees the hunter coming to grab him, and he pulls, and pulls, hoping he can still get away with the nuts, right up to the last moment. He would not let go of the nuts. And what happened? The hunter caught him.

LET US LET GO OF THE NUTS

And that is how it often happens with us. We want God's blessings. Yes; who does not want God's blessings? But we do not want to let go of sin; we do not want to let go of that which does not please God. And it is a crisis in our life when we have a spiritual struggle: "I know this is wrong. I know this does not honor God. I know the Lord is going to cut off His blessing, and I know God can punish me." Of course He can.

The Word of God says… One of the well-known preachers says: "God does not punish the believer, because Christ already received all the punishment on the cross of Calvary." But the Bible says: God chastens the one He loves. Yes, God chastens him. Discipline is necessary. Why come to that? Punishment can be very painful, very painful. Why not accept it the easy way, when God wants the best for us? Let us let go of those nuts, so that the little hand can come out.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A VERY SMALL REMNANT

God always has some believers who are faithful to the Lord.

A WARNING SIGN

"YOUR COUNTRY IS desolate." Do you not realize how your life is? "Your cities are burned with fire." I told you that Isaiah prophesied long before Jeremiah; therefore, he did not see when Babylon came and carried them all away captive. But what happened is that there were other, earlier wars, which were like a warning, where they devastated the cities; but they were still there, they had not been carried away captive. So that was like a warning. That is why He is telling them: "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers."

AS A COTTAGE IN A VINEYARD

"And the daughter of Zion"—He is speaking of Jerusalem—"is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city." Do you know what "as a cottage in a vineyard" means? It turns out they knew there were thieves who might come to steal the grapes. So they would put up something temporary, a shelter of branches, like that, right? It was not that the person lived there with his whole family; he stayed there the time necessary until they could harvest the grapes. So it was a shelter of branches. But what happens? Once they had harvested the grapes, there was no longer any need to keep watch; so that shelter, since it had been put

together any old way, they would abandon. Well: like an abandoned shelter of branches, like that, desolate, that is how your life is.

And it says: "as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers." The same thing: they would build a small hut to guard all the melons they had harvested. Because melons are heavy: they would harvest a hundred, two hundred, three hundred melons, and you could not just carry them off in a little bag. So they had to leave them there. They would put up a kind of little roof, and keep them there until they had taken out all the melons for sale or for eating, right? But afterward that was left abandoned.

These are things that those who lived in those times understood well; now it is hard for us, they have to explain them to us so that we have an idea of what it means. It says "as a besieged city": that city where the enemy had come and stolen everything, and everything had been left laid waste, desolate. Tremendous.

FAITHFUL THROUGH IT ALL

But there is a light of hope, because God always has some believers who are faithful to the Lord. And one imagines that the Christian who is faithful to the Lord never gets sick, never has an accident, everything goes well for him, he is a success. That would be easy; many would have liked to be faithful so as to receive those blessings. But no. They are people to whom the same things happen as happen to us, the very same thing, but they keep on being faithful to the Lord.

Verse 9 says: "Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant," we would be like Sodom and like Gomorrah, those cities that—you know the story—were destroyed for their grave sins.

"YE RULERS OF SODOM"

And then God says it to them like this, with strong words, almost contemptuous ones: "Ye rulers of Sodom." They were not in Sodom. "Hear the word of the LORD… give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah."

CHAPTER EIGHT

TO WHAT PURPOSE?

That is how God sees us. We look at ourselves in the mirror, but God sees our heart.

THE FORMALITIES

DO YOU KNOW what the Christians used to do…? I mean, sorry: the believers of the Old Testament—they could not be Christians, because that came later, in the New Testament, when Jesus came. The believers, the faithful, or those who professed their faith in the Lord, went on fulfilling the formalities that God had commanded: "Make the sacrifices, keep the altar burning with fire," a whole lot of things.

It says: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD." They wanted to show that they were religious, religious; but that is of no use to God. "But God commanded it!" Yes, God commanded it, with a life consistent with what you are professing. But not just going through the sacrifices any old way, and then… Like people who go to church to confess, and when they have confessed, they say: "Now I am back to zero with God. I no longer owe God anything; everything is confessed. Now, this week I can sin, no problem."

SERVICES GOD CANNOT BEAR

So: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat"—the grease, or the suet—"of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When

ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread"—to trample—"my courts," My holy places? "Bring no more vain"—or useless —"oblations; incense"—those perfumes—"is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

"Those services are not at all pleasing to Me, those meetings you hold, where you sing to Me: 'Blessed be the LORD, my Rock.' But it does not please Me in the least, because you sing that to Me, but then you leave here and do whatever you like."

RAISED HANDS, HANDS FULL OF BLOOD

Ah: "When ye spread forth your hands"—have you noticed that some raise their hands: "Lord…"?—"when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you." I do not even want to look at you. "Yea, when ye make many prayers"—exactly what we always say, that we have to pray, that we have to pray; well, here we do it: we pray, we pray, yes—"when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

Your hands are full of blood, of guilt, as if you had killed a person. Your hands are full of blood. That is how God sees us. We look at ourselves in the mirror: "How good I still look! Oh yes, I'll put a little cream on here." All very nice; but God sees our heart.

WHITE AS SNOW

"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

And after you have a change of attitude, a true repentance, then: come, says the LORD, afterward, and let us settle accounts. Let us do the accounts. Though your sins be red as scarlet, they shall be made white and have the color of snow. Though they be red like crimson, they will be as white as white wool.

God put those colors here, in the prophecy, because they are practically impossible to remove. A cloth that gets stained with that… It is very difficult, not to say impossible, to remove those stains. But God can cleanse my life. God can cleanse your life, and He can restore us once again to fellowship with God. Because what you are living is a mockery of God; it is a mask that will be uncovered at any moment.

CHAPTER NINE

A DOUBLE LIFE

God does not want impure or watered-down praise and worship.

HOW IS THE FAITHFUL CITY BECOME A HARLOT?

"**IF YE BE** willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. How is the faithful city become an harlot!"

Notice what that means: a woman who is with everyone, with all the men; she has no problem with it. That is a... So: "I am with the Lord. Hallelujah! Glory to God!" Then I go off to the dance, then I do this, then I do that. Do you see?

THE BELIEVER ON THE PARANÁ RIVER

I have told you this, but I will tell it to you again, at the risk of being repetitive, because I know there are people who perhaps have never heard it. There was a believer just like us, just the same as us. He dressed like us, nice like us; he knew how to pray just like us, he sang like us, he gave offerings too. Yes, he came to the services, he came early; a man worth imitating. He read the Bible, he prayed; everything, everything, everything, everything. He had a wife, he had children; everything.

Well, from time to time he was away from home, because he had work of the traveling-salesman kind, right? He went to other provinces. One time they were

going along in a boat, an evangelistic launch, on the river..., what is it called?, the Paraná River, right? The one that runs along the side. Well, yes: that one, the Paraná River. And so they arrived there with the launch, which they used to hand out tracts, right?—a venture which, it seems to me, no longer exists.

So they went past a house with the launch, and there was that believer in a little undershirt—remember the ones from the old days?, the ones people used to wear, sleeveless, the little white ones—sitting there, drinking mate with another woman and other children. What do you think of that? Ah, but he kept all the observances.

Well: a double life, we call that, don't we? Perhaps you do not have a double life at that level, but you do in other things, don't you?

THY SILVER IS BECOME DROSS

Well: "How is the... city become," which was once "faithful"? This city was "full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now," there dwell "murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water."

WINE MIXED WITH WATER

That is: you sell wine of such-and-such a quality, of such-and-such a brand, but you are selling cheap wine from the barrel, you know?, and you add a little water and a little sugar. Who is going to notice?

I was told, when I was a boy... Because back then—I remember it perfectly—you did not buy a one-kilo package of sugar; you went to the corner store and bought however much you wanted. And they had something like a big wooden bin, and with a scoop like this they took it out and filled the little bag, whatever amount you wanted, right? Well, they say that they added a certain amount of sand to that sugar, to make it weigh more. That way you sold less sugar at the same price. Of course, afterward something was left there in the cup: "How strange that this is left! Could it be sugar that did not dissolve all the way?"

So here it says that they added water to the wine: “Thy wine mixed with water.” And God does not want impure or watered-down praise and worship: “Lord, You know how I love the songs, how I love to praise You.” I like one foot here, in the things of God, and the other foot in the things of the world.

CHAPTER TEN

THE REFINER AND THE SILVER

That is what God wants: that the person of the Lord Jesus be reflected in my life.

PURELY PURGE AWAY THY DROSS

BUT, OF COURSE, there is hope. Verse 25 says: "I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin."

THE SMELTING FURNACE

Do you know how the one in charge of purifying metals like gold or silver does it? He is the refiner. I am going to tell you how he purifies silver. Sometimes you do not find silver just like that among the mountains; you find it mixed with earth, with pieces of rock. So what he does is put a great big cauldron, like this—well, I don't want to move away from here, so that you can hear well. He puts a cauldron on the fire, puts in all the raw silver, and it begins to heat, to heat, to heat. Then everything that is dirty rises to the top. That is the blessing the refiner has.

It is a work of great patience, you know? It is not like when one is making soup and, meanwhile, I go off to the greengrocer's. No, no, no: you have to be there. So, as the dross rises, with a great big ladle—because that stuff is boiling; if you took it into your head to put your finger in, like this, your finger would disappear, because it is molten silver, right?—with the ladle he takes out all those dirty things that are

called dross. He takes it out, he takes all of it out, all, all, and he keeps on waiting, you see? Because it is not that he took it out once: more keeps rising, because it keeps getting hotter, hotter, hotter.

And sometimes God has to put us like that, in the smelting furnace, to take away our impurities. You say: "But why is this happening to me? Why is that happening to me?" "I am purifying you. You have a lot of dross, you know?"

WHEN HIS FACE IS SEEN

But when will the refiner finish his work? Because he is always taking out dross, dross, and it takes a long time. Do you know when this man, this refiner, finishes refining the silver? When, looking at it like this, he can see his face reflected, because it is so clean that there is no more dross in that silver metal. And that is what God wants: that the person of the Lord Jesus be reflected in my life.

THE FALL IN THE COURTYARD

What a thing! You know that I had a very bad fall, there, in the courtyard. They thought I had broken a leg, or my hip, or my arm, and everyone was worried: "Your head? Did you hit your head?" I could not get up; it took several of them to lift me up.

Afterward, at home—you have no idea what it was like! I could not sit down. Such pain… The cries! I would sit down, and then I could not get up to lie down. You have no idea what that was like. I could barely make it to the edge of the bed. My wife helped me with everything, with getting up. It seems that, when one is like that, one feels more like going to the bathroom, who knows, right? Or feels like coughing, and one could not; I could not cough either. And my wife simply did not sleep. I would call her, because I could not do anything.

And you know that, when one is in that situation, God speaks to you. And there must not be a single word that says: "But how can this be, Lord? I am pastor of the

congregation. Don't You realize? You know that I read the Bible every day, that I attend every service." No, no, no, no. That has nothing to do with it. "The trial came to you because I am taking out your dross."

And you will think: "Has He left him like a mirror, so that the face of Christ can be seen?" No: all the dross that is still left! But well, when the Lord comes to take His church, or if I die, the Lord is going to transform me, He is going to give me a new body, and I will be perfect. But, in the meantime, we have to fight.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO GOD

Lord, to whom shall we go, if only You have the words of eternal life?

THE OAKS AND THE GARDENS

VERSE 28 SAYS: "And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together." All their bones will be broken; it is a figure of speech, right? "And they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed."

It turns out that wherever there were oaks, trees, and wherever there were gardens, they made their sacrifices to other gods. And well, even though the oak is a strong, large tree, and even though the garden is beautiful, that does not mean that God approves of you.

"EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL FOR ME"

A brother was saying to his pastor—I knew the pastor, but I did not know the brother who said this, or at least I do not remember him: "How the Lord blesses me, that everything is going well for me! I have no trials, I have nothing. How the Lord loves me!" And the pastor said to him: "Perhaps it is the other way round. Perhaps the other way round: everything is going well for you because you are not right with the Lord." Because when one is right with the Lord, God allows one to have difficulties, trials, to shape you.

"For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong"—the one who thinks himself strong—"shall be as tow," which gets burned. That is what is left over when hemp or flax is combed, right? "And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark": those are tiny little sparks that suddenly appear and can burn everything up; "and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them."

"FROM ONE DAY TO THE NEXT"

And one says: "But how? That Christian who came to every service, who…, who knows, who sang… What happened to him?" "Look: from one day to the next, you know? From one day to the next he went off into the world, as if he had never known the Lord." Not from one day to the next. He went on accepting sin. He said: "Well, nobody's perfect. I accept lying, I accept this, I accept that."

BEFORE THE MASK FALLS

And so, sisters and brothers, we need to return to the Lord, to go back, but with all our heart, confessing all our sins to Him and, in His name, with His power, forsaking every sin that we know is sin, that does not please God, so that God can bless us. Because this thing that seems to you to be all fine is all wrong; and at any moment the mask falls, and everyone will know. It says that there are hidden sins that come to light afterward. Before that happens, set everything right with the Lord and turn away from all of that. Then you will not have to hide or anything.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT

I remember that, with sister Lila, from another church, and sometimes also with Dali, we used to go visiting. And once we arrived at a rented house, where there were rooms on one side and on the other, and a hallway in the middle. We knew that in the third unit there lived a married couple who had come to the church a little, and we wanted to visit them.

We knocked on the door there. No one came out. We knew they were in, because by then we were specialists, like FBI detectives, right? We stood there quite a while. After a while they opened to us, and we immediately realized why they had taken so long: because before we got there, up to the moment we knocked on the door, they had been smoking. And it was not easy to get rid of the smell of the cigarette, right? And however much they did whatever they did—I do not know what things they must have done—when they opened, we noticed anyway.

That is why we cannot hide, and least of all from the presence of the Lord. He knows everything we do, everything we have done; He knows everything. How shameful, isn't it? But well, He is the only one. Lord, to whom shall we go, if only You have the words of eternal life?

TO THE SAME LORD

A little boy once said to his mother: "Mom, I did something bad." "Well," she says, "go to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you." "It's that I already did it again; these same things." "There is no other way: you have to go to the same Lord whom you asked for forgiveness last time."

Brethren, there is no other way. We have to go to the Lord. We have to ask Him for forgiveness. We have to forsake sin. Then reading the Bible will truly make sense.

Even so, one says: "Well, as long as I do not sort that out, I am not going to come to the services anymore and I am not going to read the Bible." Even worse! Keep reading it, for God can give you a way out of your sin. Keep attending the services, because God will keep speaking to you. And make the decision. It is time to return to God. Let us pray.

PRAYER

Thank You very much, Father, for Isaiah chapter 1, which speaks strongly to us, but at the same time gives us hope, because it promises to cleanse our heart, so that it

may be left white as snow, or as white wool. Because You have power, Lord, to make us return to You with all our heart, to return to our first love, to return to obeying You, to walk in Your ways, to consult You about everything we are going to do.

We do not want to keep banging our heads against the wall. We want to follow Your ways, so as not to fail over and over again because of our stubbornness, because of our sin. We ask that You forgive us, that You cleanse us with the precious blood that the Lord Jesus once shed on the cross of Calvary.

Thank You very much, Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

God bless you richly.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

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Hebrews 2:1* — "Lest at any time we should let them slip" (Chapter 5)

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1 Corinthians 15:51–52* — We shall be changed (Chapter 10)

1 Timothy 5:24* — Sins that come to light afterward (Chapter 11)

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Revelation 2:4* — The first love (Chapter 11)

1 John 1:7* — The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin (Chapter 11)

** The preacher did not cite chapter and verse; the reference was identified by the editors.*

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Marcos Andrés Nehoda is the pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church—whose motto is "God First" (*Dios Primero*)—located at 346 Suipacha Street, Sarandí, Province of Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Metropolitan Area, AMBA), Argentine Republic. He began pastoring at the age of 30 and is now 70; that is to say, he has been pastoring the same congregation for 40 years.

By the grace and mercy of the Lord, the church has sent two missionaries to preach and evangelize in Islamic countries, and has helped to start new works and testimonies, both in the district of Avellaneda (helping a Pentecostal church) and in the city of La Plata (helping a Baptist church). For many years it has at the same time known joyful seasons in impoverished neighborhoods in several localities, where some children have grown up, been baptized in their youth, and even entered into marriage in the Lord.

The church gathers children on Saturdays—the children of congregation members and of neighbors from the surrounding area—nurturing their lives; teenagers and young adults are cared for by responsible individuals. There are meetings for women, for men, for teenagers and young adults, and for children. On Sunday mornings the congregation gathers to worship and praise the Lord, to listen to the exposition of His Holy Word, and, for those who have already been baptized, to take part in the Lord's Supper.

The church has provided clothing and shoes to charities in remote areas such as the provinces of Chaco and Entre Ríos; it recognizes need and helps regardless of denomination, provided sound biblical doctrine is taught. It has distributed pamphlets of God's Word door to door on several occasions; its meeting place served as the operations center for L.A.P.E.N. (Argentine League for the Evangelization of Children), and it has conducted children's courses with materials provided by brethren residing in the United States, including full-color New Testaments adapted for children.

For years he took the opportunity to broadcast radio programs on FM, and he currently uses social media to spread the Word of God.

Follow on:

- The Church's YouTube Channel
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