

Main Idea: God is the perfect father and we can learn much from Him. In Isaiah 1:2-20 the prophet shows us three things about this perfect father.

- I. We see the example of the perfect father (2a).
 - A. He gave His children life (Gen. 12:2).
 - B. He gave His children His name (Ex. 6:3).
 - C. He gave His children a home (Ex. 6:7-8).
 - D. He met His children's needs (Ex. 16).
 - E. He taught His children right and wrong (Ex. 20).
 - F. He prepared His children to live for His honor in the real world (Ex. 21ff.).
- II. We see the experience of the perfect father (2b-4).
 - A. His children rebelled against Him (2b).
 - B. His children failed to know Him (3).
 - C. His children grieved Him with sinful choices (4).
- III. We see the enduring love of the perfect father (5-20).
 - A. He disciplined them (5-9).
 1. This demonstrated His love.
 2. This demonstrated His passion for His family name.
 3. This demonstrated that sin has consequences.
 - B. He kept talking to them (10-17).
 1. He urged them to change.
 2. He helped them see why they needed to change.
 3. He told them specifically what needed to change.
 - C. He offered them forgiveness (18-20).
 1. He made forgiveness possible by providing a Savior.
 2. He made the choice very clear.

Implications: Two responses...

1. Give praise to the Perfect Father.
2. Give your family a picture of the Perfect Father.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 145

Did you know that Ben Franklin had an illegitimate son? He did. His name was William, and Ben brought the boy into his house and raised him.

Did you know that William eventually became royal governor of New Jersey? He did, during the 1760s.

Did you know that Ben Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence? Certainly you did. But did you know that his son, William, not only didn't sign it, but opposed the revolution and remained a loyalist to the end? He did, and went to prison for it.

I read an article about this called, "My Son, My Enemy," and was amazed to learn not just about their extreme political views, but the tragic outcome of their father-son relationship. Says the author:

Although William was imprisoned during the war, his property was confiscated, and his wife Elizabeth died of what her husband called "a broken heart," he was eager to revive his "affectionate Intercourse and Connexion [sic]" with his father at war's end. Benjamin would not hear of reconciliation.

Benjamin left his son virtually nothing in his will. William sailed from his native country in 1782 for exile in England. "I must resign myself," William wrote, "for the remaining Days of my Existence to that Solitary State which is most repugnant to my Nature."²³

*** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ For an earlier development of this passage, see WBC 6/18/06.

² <http://content.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1005156,00.html>

³ His biography points out that Ben was known by his ability to carry a grudge (p. 39). This was driven by his passion for his reputation. Says Sheila L. Skemp, "His Autobiography is filled with examples of his obsession with creating and preserving his image. Throughout his life, his anger at those who tried to

It's often said that kids need models, and that's true. But dads need models, too. "What's a dad supposed to do?" That's a question I've pondered for the past thirty years.

I'm thankful that God has provided us with a model, not only of a *good* father, but the *perfect* father. This is a model that every person who is a dad, aspires to be a dad, has a dad, or knows a dad, should give serious attention to! We need to know what a dad is supposed to be and do, for as go the dads, so go the families.

Who is this model, this perfect father? Jesus answered that question in His sermon on the mount when He said (in Matthew 5:48), "Be perfect, therefore, as your *heavenly Father* is perfect."

In a very real sense we all have in our minds a standard for what we think a good dad looks like. It may be based on what our dad did (or failed to do). The standard may be derived from books we've read about fathers, or for observations we've made by looking at other earthly fathers. And though helpful, if our idea of fatherhood is established based on observations of human fathers, we have a deficient standard in mind for the simple fact that every human father is a sinner and has fallen short of God's standard.

There's only one perfect standard. There's only one perfect father. *God*. God is the perfect father and we can learn much from Him. Where? Thankfully, God has revealed Himself to us in His Word, the Bible.

What kind of father is He? What does He do for and with His children? What is His goal for them? How does He raise them? It's worth noting that the perfect father has imperfect children. How does He respond when they dishonor Him?

There are many passages in Scripture to which we could turn and learn about the perfect father. I want us to look again at one of my favorites, Isaiah 1:2-20, which reveals for us three things about the perfect father.

I. We see the example of the perfect father (2a).

What did the perfect father do? He tells us in Isaiah 1:2, "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I reared children and brought them up...'"

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a child born in 2015 will cost \$233,610 to raise.⁴

But money isn't the only concern in child-rearing. There's a more fundamental issue at stake. What's a dad *supposed to do*?

In our day there are tons of expectations about what a good dad will do in raising a child, ranging from making sure his kids experience every organized activity in the community (from t-ball to music camp), wear the latest clothing styles, have their own bedroom, television, smartphone, and more.

No wonder a dad is constantly asking himself, "Have I done enough? Have I given my kids enough?"

It's essential then (and refreshing) that we take a look at the perfect father. He reared children. He brought up children. He did it *perfectly*, too. How did He do it? We find out when we go back to the Pentateuch where we see the family story. We discover there that the perfect father did basically six things for His children.

A. He gave His children life (Gen. 12:2). We need to answer a question at this point. Who are these children that God says He raised? We find the answer in Genesis 12:1-2: "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your

destroy his carefully crafted reputation knew no bounds (p. 43)." Taken from *Benjamin Franklin, Patriot, and William Franklin, Loyalist*. <https://journals.psu.edu/phj/article/viewFile/25468/25237>

⁴ time.com/money/4629700/child-raising-cost-department-of-agriculture-report/

father's household and go to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing."

God chose a man named Abraham to be the means by which He would reclaim this fallen world to and for Himself. As you know, He blessed Abraham with a promised son, Isaac, and a promised grandson, Jacob. He turned Jacob's twelve sons into a nation called Israel, an elect nation through which He would ultimately send His Son to redeem a people from every nation in the world for His glorious purposes.

So these are the children God has in mind in Isaiah 1, the descendants of Abraham, the nation of Israel. These children existed because their perfect father gave them life.

B. He gave His children His name (Ex. 6:3). Here's what He told His infant nation in Exodus 6:3, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them."

No other nation received this great privilege, only Israel. Their father gave them His name.

Men, you can give your kids a lot of things but few things are as valuable as this. You've given them your *name*. Your name is more than an identification label. In the Bible it represents your character, your heritage, your reputation, your very life.

C. He gave His children a home (Ex. 6:7-8). Exodus 6:7-8—"I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD."

That home God gave His children was the Promised Land, a special place on planet earth where God chose to dwell with His chosen family.

D. He met His children's needs (Ex. 16). In Exodus 16 we're told He gave His children manna and quail to eat. This was just the beginning. In the promised land He gave them the fruit of the land to enjoy, as well as every other good and necessary provision, including cities to live in, protection from enemies, even leaders to guide them.

E. He taught His children right and wrong (Ex. 20). In Exodus 20 He gave two tablets to Moses inscribed with ten commandments. This too was an expression of His love for His children. No good father lets his children do their own thing. He knows his children have a sinful bent and if allowed to go their own way, will dishonor God and destroy themselves and others. They need guidance.

That's what the perfect father gave His children. Guidance. He taught them what is right and what is wrong. "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not," He explained.

By the way, this Father didn't give His children random instructions. The laws He gave were a reflection of His moral character. Which meant, if His children kept them, they would bring honor to the family name. But if they disobeyed them, they would disgrace His name.

F. He prepared His children to live for His honor in the real world (Ex. 21ff.). You'll notice that after giving the Decalogue in Exodus 20, the Lord revealed many other commands and instructions, beginning in Exodus 21 through the end of the Pentateuch. We read case laws regarding protection of property, guidelines concerning care of widows and orphans, instructions pertaining to annual feasts, tabernacle construction, offerings, and more.

Why did God give this material to the Israelites? In short, He is preparing His children for life in the Promised Land. In other words, He's showing them in practical terms how to live for His honor in the real world.

How do you raise a child? There's how the perfect father did it. He gave His children life, His name, and a safe home to live in. He didn't spoil His children but

certainly met their needs. He taught them right and wrong, and took concrete steps to prepare them to live for the honor of the family name in the real world.

There's the example of the perfect father, and Jesus said He is our example ("Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect").

Dads, does your fathering reflect the pattern of the perfect father? Are you seeking to raise your children like He did?

"But I'm not perfect!" you say.

No, none of us are. But that doesn't change the standard. Jesus says this is what God expects of us. "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

"But how can a sinner like me every attain God's perfect standard?"

Good question, and here is the wonderful answer. The perfect Father sent the perfect Son into the world to take care of our sin problem. That's why He chose Abraham and the nation of Israel, so that He might send the perfect Son into the world as our substitute.

So when we come to the New Testament, we hear this substitute Son teaching His followers to pray, "*Our father in heaven.*" Not everyone has the right to call God his or her father, for the simple reason that not everyone is His child. Jesus said, "You must be born again."

We'll hear more about this Son in a few moments, but know this. If you accept God's Son, Jesus Christ, as your Savior, God forgives you of your sin and gives you the perfect merit of His Son. In other words, He gives you in Christ the ability to please Him, to be like Him, to resemble the One who is the Perfect Father!

Dear friend, if you are in Christ, you have an amazing Father! Thank Him today for His goodness. And dads, let's resolve to emulate Him. Let's seek to be like Him in the way we lead our homes. He is our example.

Now answer this. What happens when a perfect father raises his children perfectly? My heart aches for parents who feel the weight of wayward children. I hope you will be encouraged by what you are about to see.

II. We see the experience of the perfect father (2b-4).

God continues to speak in verse 2, "I reared children and brought them up, *but...*" Uh oh, not a good word at this point. BUT. God certainly did a good job, the best of jobs, raising His children, BUT! But what?

The perfect father experienced three very painful outcomes.

A. His children rebelled against Him (2b). "I reared children and brought them up, but they have *rebelled* against me." God's kids rebelled. They refused to submit to the wisdom and authority of their perfect father. It's very personal. They rebelled *against me*.

Years later Jesus told the story of the prodigal son who said, "Give me my inheritance, old man. I'm leaving. Your money means more to me than you." That's what God's children did to Him. They gladly sponged up His good gifts, but they rejected Him.

B. His children failed to know Him (3). "The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."

One evening about ten years ago our family took our dog Maddie to Scioto Hills Camp. We thought she would enjoy swimming in the lake (all dogs can swim, right?). I threw a stick in the water, and Maddie tentatively ventured out to retrieve it. We couldn't contain our laughter as we watched her try to swim. Her back legs went straight down in the water, her nose popped up, and her front legs did a high step, kind of resembling a prancing horse. She reached the stick and brought it back to the shore.

I then threw the stick out further in the water, and she instinctively went after it. This time, however, she lost her sense of direction and started veering off into deeper water, *away* from the shore. As we watched, we noticed that she was starting to flounder. It soon became obvious she was going under. I threw my wallet out and went into the water to save our dog.

I'm not sure Maddie ever figured out what happened. I wrapped my arms around her and carried her out of the water to safety.

But that's not the end of it. Ten minutes later, a fish jumped out in the lake and when Maddie saw it, she took off after it. Once again she soon began to struggle in the water and started going under, and once again I went in (street clothes and all) to rescue her from drowning.

So our dog didn't know how to swim. But here's the interesting thing. Just because she couldn't swim didn't daunt her from attempting to obey my command to retrieve a stick if I threw it in the water. She knew her master. She trusted her master. She wasn't about to let a little water keep her from attempting to please her master.

"The ox knows his master," the Lord says, *"but my people do not understand."*

Just think of it! Even animals soon learn to appreciate the hands that feed and care for them. If you have a pet you know what I'm talking about. But God's children, Israel, did not. They reached a point where they didn't even know Him. What's more...

C. His children grieved Him with sinful choices (4). "Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him."

Feel the Father's pain communicated in that first word, "Ah!" Yes, God is sovereign. Yes, nothing takes Him by surprise. Yet even the Omniscient One hurts deeply when His children tragically turn from Him and traffic in sin. Ah!!!

This is the first of twenty-six times Isaiah uses this special name of God in his book. God's children spurned "The Holy One of Israel" (*Qadowsh Israel*).

If my children, when they were little, came in from playing outside and had dirty hands, I *might* notice it and urge them to wash. But my wife WOULD notice it and send them to the sink. Cleanliness is a big thing to her.

Know this. Spiritual cleanliness is a big thing to the perfect father. He is *The Holy One of Israel*. That's what "holy" means, separate from impurity and sin. So when God's own children soil themselves with sinful choices, choices that will harm them and mar the family name, it grieves Him. Oh, it grieves Him! Ah!!!

Perhaps you too are saying *Ah!!!* these days. Your child, the one you taught to love God and God's ways, has turned away from you and your God, and right now is grieving you with sinful choices. You're not alone. In truth, the Perfect Father understands.

This raises the question. So what did He do about it? What did the Perfect Father do in response to the waywardness of His disobedient children? Isaiah shows us in scene three. Having seen the example and experience of the perfect father...

III. We see the enduring love of the perfect father (5-20).

I mean *enduring* love. According to 1 Corinthians 13:8, love never fails. It never gives up. No matter how the recipient responds, the true lover keeps doing what is right. The perfect father demonstrated His enduring love for His children in three ways.

A. He disciplined them (5-9). He talks about the chastening in verses 5-6: "Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness— only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil."

How did the perfect father respond when His children rebelled against Him? He disciplined them. Some of the discipline He administered directly. Some of the discipline came in the form of the consequences His children experienced as a result of their sinful choices.

We need some historical background to understand. When Isaiah was a young man (around 750 BC), his nation experienced prosperity. But instead of thanking their generous Father, God's people became proud and self-absorbed. In 722 BC Assyria attacked, conquered, and deported the ten northern tribes of Israel. Isaiah, who lived in the Judah, watched as the Assyrians moved south, raping the land, and eventually surrounded Jerusalem. In 701 BC the situation was bleak (you can read about it in Isaiah 36-37), with 185,000 Assyrian soldiers encamped around the city of David.

The perfect father describes His children's dreadful experience in verses 7-9: "*Your country is desolate, your cities burned with fire; your fields are being stripped by foreigners right before you, laid waste as when overthrown by strangers. The Daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard, like a hut in a field of melons, like a city under siege. Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah.*"

That's exactly what happened to God's children. Finally, in 701 BC King Hezekiah pleaded with God for deliverance from Sennacherib, king of Assyria (you can read his prayer in 37:15-20). The Lord answered Hezekiah's plea and sent His angel to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers that night.

What do we learn about discipline from the perfect father? His discipline demonstrated three things...

1. *This demonstrated His love.* When a parent says, "I love my child too much to discipline her," it indicates a faulty view of love. "The Lord disciplines those he loves," Hebrews 12:6 states, and so will any parent who truly loves his or her child.

2. *This demonstrated His passion for His family name.* In fact, that was the basis of Hezekiah's appeal when He cried out for God's deliverance, Isaiah 37:20, "O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

That's why God disciplines, to protect the family name. It's also why He intervened this time because NOT to do so would have tarnished His name among the nations. There's another reason God disciplined His children...

3. *This demonstrated that sin has consequences.* One of the worst things a parent can do for a child is to prevent the child from experiencing the consequences of sinful choices.

So little Johnny doesn't show up for Little League practice and consequently finds out he's benched for the next game. Johnny's parents are furious, and call the coach. "You're being unfair! Let Johnny play." And so the penalty is removed and Johnny plays.

A few years later a teacher flunks Johnny for cheating on his history test, but Johnny's parents once again intervene. "He needs that passing grade! You're being too harsh," they insist. And so the grade is "adjusted," Johnny gets the grade, and eventually graduates "with honors."

So Johnny heads off for the university, but ends up on academic probation his second semester. "Those professors don't know how to teach," he explains to his folks. Of course, he doesn't mention the fact that he missed half of his classes due to his social life. Mom and dad keep sending the tuition checks, however, not to mention making his car and credit card payments.

Johnny's parents love their son. They make sacrifices for him. They give him everything they can. Almost. They're not giving him the opportunity to learn that sin has consequences.

It is tough being a parent, especially when your kids make decisions that result in pain for them (and you). Our tendency is to want to intervene, to protect, to rescue.

But please notice that the perfect father did not do that with His children. He let His children experience the consequences of their foolish and sinful choices. They lost the promised land—their homes were burned, their properties destroyed, their freedom gone—until they had nothing left.

Actually, that's not true. They still had *Him*, if they would simply come back home.

He made that clear by doing something else that demonstrated His enduring love. First, He disciplined them. Secondly...

B. He kept talking to them (10-17). Verse 10—"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!"

This is so significant. What is God doing in verse 10? He's *talking* with His wayward children. Yes, He's using strong language, but please note it is language! God is still speaking to His children, rebellious though they were.

That's so different from the tactic we sinful parents often use when our kids disappoint us. It's called the *silent treatment*. Our kids hurt us so we hurt them back by shutting off communication. We make them earn our attention by taking it away for a time.

For sure, as we've just seen, God does allow His children to experience the painful consequences of their sinful choices. But even then He keeps the communication channel open. Do you see what the Perfect Father did NOT do in Isaiah 1? There's no silent treatment! Instead, He kept talking with His children.

About what? There's no idle chit-chat, for sure. This father discussed three subjects with His wayward kids in verses 11-17. I'll mention the three subjects first, then we'll read what He actually said.

1. *He urged them to change.*
2. *He helped them see why they needed to change.*
3. *He told them specifically what needed to change.*

Now listen to the perfect father as He speaks (11-17): "'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. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 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; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.'"

Did you catch the three subjects? The perfect father urged His children to change. He helped them see why. And He talked in specifics, not vague generalities. Each of these aspects of communication is vital.

First, He calls for change. "Stop bringing meaningless offerings!" Apparently, though wayward, His children were still quite religious. They regularly came to the temple. They offered their sacrifices. They observed holy days and had religious

festivals. Why, they even raised their hands when they prayed—and they prayed regularly!

But God said, “Stop it! No more empty religious activity!” The problem wasn’t the religious activity—all of it was commanded and necessary. The problem was that there was a disconnect between their religion and their lives.

It’s like the teen who comes to church, mouths the words to the songs, acts like he’s listening to the sermon, but refuses to apply what he hears to his life. What’s he need to do? Stop coming to church? No! The problem isn’t church. The problem is hypocrisy, thinking that if you do some religious things on Sunday, you’re okay with God.

That’s apparently what the Israelites thought. So God confronted the problem head on. He told them, “Your hands are full of blood,” in verse 15. In verse 16 He talks about their “evil deeds” and says they were “doing wrong.” In verse 17 He calls them to seek justice and indicates they were exploiting vulnerable people, like the ‘fatherless’ and ‘widows’.

You might say these kids were giving God their offerings, but not their bank accounts. They went through some impressive religious motions but failed to practice true religion. James 1:27 says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Today we might call them “Sunday Christians.” Please note the perfect father didn’t settle for his kids being Sunday Christians.

Notice also that this father was no mere behaviorist. He focused on their heart problem. He exposed the root cause. He addressed the *why* question.

For instance, in Isaiah 43:27 He shares something very important with His children. “Your first father sinned; your spokesmen rebelled against me.” What’s this Father doing? He’s helping His children understand that sin is an *inherited problem*.

Why do we sin? Fundamentally, we sin because we are sinners. In other words, we sin because we have inherited a sin nature from our parents, who inherited their sin nature from their parents. “Your *first father* sinned,” the Lord says, probably referring to Abraham. Your problem goes back to father Abraham, and ultimately to father Adam.

Let this sink in. Our problem isn’t merely that we make sinful choices. If that were the case, we could conceivably change simply by making good choices. No, our problem goes much deeper. We sin because we are sinners. We have inherited a sin nature that is warped and bent away from God.

Dads, do you talk with your kids about *why* they sin? Have you taught them about Adam and the effect his original sin has on them? Have you helped them see that the reason they fight with their brother or sister over a toy is because of a sin nature that they inherited from you, and ultimately from Adam, a sin nature that they cannot change on their own, that only God has the power to change?

Have you explained to them this is why they need the cross of Jesus, because at the cross Jesus paid the penalty for sin and broke its power-hold for any sinner who will put their total trust in Him?

Yes, dads, and moms too, and teachers, and youth leaders, and camp counselors, we must tell our kids *why* they sin, and why they need a Savior.

That’s what the perfect father did. As well as this. Thirdly, He addressed in specific terms what needed to change.

Wash and make yourselves clean. Seek justice. Defend the cause of the fatherless. Why those commands? Because those were the specific areas where changed was most needed for these kids.

I asked a person that I knew was disobeying God how they were doing with the Lord, and they replied, “Just fine! I’m doing this and this. And He’s doing this and this.”

But it was all selective obedience, doing enough to take the focus off the area of needed change.

This father wouldn’t let his kids hide behind their pretense. He identified the specific steps they needed to take if they were serious about being right with Him.

Then the perfect father showed His enduring love in a third way. First, He disciplined them. Second, He kept talking to them.

C. He offered them forgiveness (18-20). “‘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. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.’ For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

There’s a story about a father and son who had become estranged. The son ran away, and the father set off to find him. He searched for months to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper, which read, “Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.” The following Saturday 800 Pacos showed up, looking for forgiveness and love from their fathers.⁵

“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow,” says the perfect father to His rebellious children.

But how can a holy God forgive sinners? He tells us how in the rest of the book.

1. *He made forgiveness possible by providing a Savior.* Isaiah would have much to say in his book about the Savior that God would send, including...

Isaiah 9:6 “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, *Everlasting Father*, Prince of Peace.” (see also Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah 53:5-6 “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

It’s worth noting that several of the terms we’ve seen in Isaiah 1 appear again in Isaiah 53. *Injured. Beaten. Afflicted.* That’s because in God’s plan this is what His own Son would experience in order to redeem sinners from their lostness.

Yes, the perfect father made forgiveness possible. How? By sending His own Son into the world to take our sins upon Himself and pay their just penalty. In essence, Jesus is the Father’s letter that says, “Dear Paco, meet me at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you.”

An astounding offer! Complete forgiveness. A full pardon for sin made possible by the generous work of God Himself. And it will lead to a response, says the perfect father in verse 20.

2. *He made the choice very clear.* “If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land,” He told the Israelites. Conversely, “If you resist and rebel, you will be devoured.” The choice was theirs. And ours.

Obey. Or resist. Accept My forgiveness. Or keep rebelling against Me.

Today we’ve considered the example of the perfect father, the experience of the perfect father, and the enduring love of the perfect father. We too need to respond.

⁵ *Bits & Pieces*, October 15, 1992, pp. 13.

Implications: Two responses...

1. *Give praise to the Perfect Father!* We've seen His example today, His experience, and His enduring love. The perfect father deserves our praise.

You say, "I'm not sure He is my father. What must I do to enter His family?"

I must say this again. We need more than His example, perfect though it is, for while it shows us what we should do, it's not enough.

Ben Franklin shows us that. The year before he died, Ben Franklin disinherited his only living son, saying, "The part he acted against me in the late War, which is of public Notoriety, will account for my leaving him no more of an Estate he endeavored to deprive me of."

If the man who is considered one of the wisest Americans to have ever lived went to his grave not on speaking terms with his son, then it must take more than wisdom and an example to be a good dad.

What does it take? The Bible gives the answer in John 1:12-13, "To all who received him [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Believe in Christ and become a child of God today!

2. *Give your family a picture of the Perfect Father.* Men, let's lead the way. Our families should see God portrayed in us. Yes, we all fall short, but thank God that where sin abounds grace does much more abound. What needs to change in your life so your family gets a clearer picture of the perfect father? Let's go to work on it today.