

March 21, 2021
UNIT: ESSENTIALS OF CHRISTIANITY
Session 3: THE NATURE OF SIN—Isaiah, Chapter 59

The Point: We are sinners, and on our own, we can do nothing about it.

INTRODUCTION

It helps when we understand the book of Isaiah. He lived in Judah, preached from 700-680 B.C., was cousin to their King Uzziah and prophesized judgement because Assyria had already taken over the Northern Kingdom. He is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet.

I remember Isaiah chiefly as “the mini-bible”. He wrote 39 chapters (as in our Old Testament) to call Judah back to God—judgment. Then he offered 27 more chapters (as in our New Testament), to give comfort by telling God’s salvation through the Messiah (chapters 40-66).

We will be studying from Isaiah’s “hope” passage. He will condemn our sin, but as you will see, he will also introduce God’s grace!

Isaiah 59: 1-5

*“Indeed, the Lord’s arm is not too weak to save, and His ear is not too deaf to hear.
But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not listen.
For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers, with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, and your tongues mutter injustice.
No one makes claims justly; no one pleads honestly.
They trust in empty and worthless words; they conceive trouble and give birth to iniquity.
They hatch viper’s eggs and weave spider’s webs.
Whoever eats their eggs will die; crack one open, and a viper is hatched.”*

These verses show the division between us and God. God hears us BUT—our sins have separated us, and God WILL NOT listen. God is perfect and cannot bear us when we do not seek His mercy. Heaven does not allow the failing.

We know that sin is disobedience, rebellion, and mutiny. We reject God’s authority over us; we declare our independence from the Lord. Sin is what we do when we place OUR desires, agendas, and ourselves above God. There’s an old saying: “If you feel far away from God, guess who moved?”

Isaiah 59: 6-8

“Their webs cannot become clothing, and they cannot cover themselves with their works. Their works are sinful works, and violent acts are in their hands.

Their feet run after evil, and they rush to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are sinful thoughts; ruin and wretchedness are in their paths.

They have not known the path of peace, and there is no justice in their ways. They have made their roads crooked; and no one who walks on them will know peace.”

Our deceptions do not give us cover before a holy God. No peace, no justice, crooked ways. Our sin will take us further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay.

“Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.” James 1:14-15

Isaiah 59: 9-13

“Therefore, justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We hope for light, but there is darkness; for brightness, but we live in the night.

We grope along a wall like the blind; we grope like those without eyes. We stumble at noon as though it were twilight; we are like the dead among those who are healthy.

We all growl like bears and moan like doves. We hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.

For our transgressions have multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us. For our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities:

transgression and deception against the Lord, turning away from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering lying words from the heart.”

These verses change Isaiah’s perspective from “them” to “us”. He now includes himself in man’s sinfulness.

We are blind—we live in darkness.

We hope for justice—but our errors are with us.

Our sins deny the Lord—we turn from God.

Lesson Question #4 says it well: what makes these images an effective way to describe our lives in sin?

Remember that you sin, I sin, WE ALL SIN. Apostle John says: *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” 1 John 1:8-10*

SUMMARY

Did you notice Isaiah 59:11? *“We look for salvation, but it is far off from us.”* This is Isaiah’s 2nd testament (chapters 40-66) of hope and comfort. Isaiah goes on in chapter 59:15-21 to state:

*“Now the Lord saw,
And it was displeasing in His sight that there
was no justice.
And He saw that there was no man,
And was astonished that there was no one
to intercede;
Then His own arm brought salvation to Him;
And his righteousness upheld Him.
And He put on righteousness like a breastplate,
And a helmet of salvation on His head;
And he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,
And wrapped Himself with zeal as a mantle.
According to their deeds, so He will repay,
Wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies;
To the coastlands He will make recompense.
So, they will fear the name of the Lord from the west
And His glory from the rising of the sun,
For He will come like a rushing stream,
Which the wind of the Lord drives.
‘And a Redeemer will come to Zion,
And to those who turn from transgression
in Jacob’, declares the Lord.
‘And as for me, this is My covenant with them’, says the Lord:
‘My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which
I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth,
nor from the mouth of your offspring,
nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,’
says the Lord, ‘from now and forever.’
(New American Standard Bible)*

We look forward to Christ Jesus and His resurrection! We in the New Covenant know; *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 3:23-24) Our next Lenten lessons will study this sacrifice.

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