

ISAIAH 59 | *Snake Eggs and Spider Webs*

Separation between Man and God

1 Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear. 2 But your sins (עוֹן) have made a separation/division (בדל) between you and your God, and your sins (חטאת) have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood (דם) and your fingers with sin-guilt (עוֹן). Your lips have spoken lies. Your tongue mutters badness/malice/injustice (עוֹלָה). 4 No one enters suit justly. No one goes to law honestly. They rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to injustice (און). 5 They hatch adders' eggs. They weave the spider's web. He who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched. 6 Their webs will not serve as clothing. Men will not cover themselves with what they make.¹ Their works are works of injustice (און), and deeds of violence (חמס) are in their hands. 7 Their feet run to evil (רע), and they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts/intents/plans (מחשבה)² are thoughts of injustice (און). Desolation and destruction are in their highways/tracks (מסלות).³ 8 The way of peace (דרך שלום) they do not know (ידע), and there is no justice (משפט) in their waggon tracks/firm paths (מעגל).⁴ They have made their roads crooked/twisted (עקש).⁵ No one who treads on them knows (ידע) peace (שלום).

We Grope Like the Blind

9 Therefore justice (משפט) is far from us, and righteousness (צדקה) does not overtake us. We wait in hope (קוה) for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. 10 We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes. We stumble at noon as in the twilight. Among those in full vigour we are like dead men. 11 We all growl like bears. We moan and moan like doves. We wait in hope (קוה)⁶ for justice (משפט), but there is none, for salvation (ישועה), but it is far from us. 12 For our moral crimes (פשע) are multiplied before you, and our sins (חטאת) testify against us. For our moral crimes (פשע) are with us, and we know our sin-guilt (עוֹן)— 13 behaving as criminals (פשע), denying (כחש)

¹ **Ge 3:7** 7 Then the eyes of both [Adam and Eve] were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

² **Is 55:7-9** 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts/intents/plans (מחשבה). Let him return to Yahweh, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares Yahweh. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

³ “[A] track firmed with stones or fill” (*HALOT*, 606).

⁴ **Is 26:7** 7 The waggon tracks (מעגל) of the righteous is level. You make level the way of the righteous.

⁵ **Pr 2:14-15** 14 ... Who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, 15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. **Pr 10:9** 9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.

⁶ Are we hoping for something that will never happen?

Yahweh, and turning back (סוג)⁷ from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart (לִב) ⁸ lying words.

No Justice, Righteousness, or Truth

14 Justice (מִשְׁפָּט) is turned back, and righteousness (צְדָקָה) stands far away, for truth (אֱמֶת) has stumbled in the public squares, and straightforwardness (נִכְחָ) cannot enter. 15 Truth (אֱמֶת) is lacking, and he who departs from evil (רַע) makes himself a prey.

His Own Arm Brought Him Salvation

15 Yahweh saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice (מִשְׁפָּט). 16 He saw that there was no man (אִישׁ),⁹ and wondered that there was no one to intercede (פָּנַע). Then his own arm brought him salvation (יִשַׁע), and his righteousness (צְדָקָה) upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness (צְדָקָה) as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) on his head. He put on garments of revenge (נִקְמָה) for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal (קִנְיָה) as a cloak. 18 According to their deeds, so will he repay (שָׁלַם), wrath (חֶמְדָּה) to his adversaries, repayment (גְּמוּלָה) to his enemies. To the coastlands he will render repayment (גְּמוּלָה). 19 So they shall fear (יִרְאֶה) the name of Yahweh from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun. For he [Messiah] will come like a rushing river (נְהַר), which the wind/breath/Spirit (רוּחַ) of Yahweh drives on (נוֹס).

A Redeemer Will Come

20 And a Redeemer (גּוֹאֲלֵל) will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn (שׁוּבוּ) from crime/wrongdoing (פְּשָׁע), declares Yahweh.

My Spirit Shall Not Depart

21 And as for me, this is my [New] covenant (בְּרִית) with them, says Yahweh. My Spirit (רוּחַ) that is upon you, and my words (דְּבָר) that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, out of the mouth of your seed, or out of the mouth of your seed's seed, says Yahweh, from now and to eternity.

⁷ **Is 50:5** 5 Lord Yahweh has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward.

⁸ See *Heart*.

⁹ **Is 51:18** 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne. There is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up. **Is 63:5** 5 I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation (יִשַׁע), and my wrath upheld me.

Commentary

1. Isaiah 59.

a. Image.

(1) According to the Corruptions Perceptions Index, New Zealand (88) is the number one least corrupt nation in the world, along with Denmark.¹⁰ The United States (67) ranks 25. Ukraine (32) ranks 117. Russia (30) ranks 129. Paraguay (28) ranks 137.

b. This is a quintessential gospel passage. It is the biblical story in one chapter.

c. Outline.

- (1) Reality of Sin (vv. 1-8).
- (2) Results of Sin (vv. 9-[]).
- (3) Reaction of God (vv. []-[]).
- (4) Results for the Redeemed ([]-[]).

2. The Reality of Sin (Is 59:1-8).

a. **Is 59:1-8** 1 Behold, Yahweh's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear. 2 But your sins (עֲוֹנוֹת) have made a separation/division (בְּדִל) between you and your God, and your sins (חַטֹּאת) have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. 3 For your hands are defiled with blood (דָּם) and your fingers with sin-guilt (עֲוֹן). Your lips have spoken lies. Your tongue mutters badness/malice/injustice (עֲוֹלָה). 4 No one enters suit justly. No one goes to law honestly. They rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to injustice (אֲוֵן). 5 They hatch adders' eggs. They weave the spider's web. He who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched. 6 Their webs will not serve as clothing. Men will not cover themselves with what they make. Their works are works of injustice (אֲוֵן), and deeds of violence (חַמָּס) are in their hands. 7 Their feet run to evil (רָע), and they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts/intents/plans (מַחְשְׁבֵהוּ) are thoughts of injustice (אֲוֵן). Oppression and destruction are in their highways/tracks (מְסֻלֹת). 8 The way of peace (דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלוֹמִים) they do not know (יָדַע), and there is no justice (מִצְדִּיקִים) in their waggon tracks/firm paths (מַעֲצָלִים). They have made their roads crooked/twisted (עִקְוִים). No one who treads on them knows (יָדַע) peace (שְׁלוֹמִים).

b. Israel's problem is not God's inability to act or hear her prayers (v. 1).

(1) The concerns addressed in Is 59:1-2 are fundamentally the same as those addressed in Is 58:1-3. Israel asks why God does not seem to answer their prayers. Why do they have no sense of his presence and power in their personal lives and in their society? Why is God not keeping all the wonderful messianic promises? The answers that they have been accepting—that God is not strong enough or that he is not really paying attention are incorrect.¹¹

(a) **Is 58:1-3** 1 Cry aloud. Do not hold back. Lift up your voice like a trumpet Declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins. 2 Yet

¹⁰ <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020>.

¹¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 513.

they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God. They ask of me righteous judgments. They delight to draw near to God. 3 Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

- (2) **Nu 11:23** 23 And Yahweh said to Moses, Is Yahweh's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not.
- (3) **Is 50:2** 2 Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?
- c. Her problem is her sins have separated her from God, so that he does not hear (v. 2).
 - (1) Isaiah alludes to Ge 1:6.¹²
 - (a) **Ge 1:6** 6 And God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate (לְבַד) the waters from the waters.
 - (2) God doesn't listen to our prayers when we commit personal sins and are therefore out of fellowship with him.
 - (a) **Ps 66:18** 18 If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, Yahweh would not have listened.
 - (b) **Pr 28:9** 9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the Torah, even his prayer is an abomination.
 - (c) **Hab 1:13** 13 You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?
 - (d) **Jer 5:25** 25 Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have kept good from you.
 - (e) **1 Jn 1:6** 6 If we say we have fellowship with [God] while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.
 - (3) It would be a total tragedy for our church if we thought we were pleasing God when we really weren't.
- d. The sin of Israel's people is pervasive (vv. 3-8):
 - (1) Their hands are defiled with blood (v. 3a).
 - (a) **Is 1:15** 15 When you [Israel] spread out your hands, I [Yahweh] will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood.
 - (2) Their fingers are defiled with sin-guilt (v. 3b).
 - (a) The parts of the body move from lesser to greater specificity.¹³
 - (3) Their lips have spoken lies (v. 3c).
 - (4) Their tongue mutters injustice (v. 3d).
 - (5) No one files lawsuits justly (v. 4a).
 - (a) Are we seeking justice while practicing injustice?
 - (6) They speak lies, conceive mischief, and give birth to injustice (v. 4b).

¹² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 513.

¹³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 514.

- (a) **Job 15:35** 35 They conceive trouble and give birth to evil, and their womb prepares deceit.
- (b) **Ps 7:14** 14 Behold, the wicked man conceives evil, is pregnant with mischief, and gives birth to lies.
- (c) **Jas 1:14-15** 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
- (7) They hatch snake eggs and weave spider webs (v. 5a).
- (8) The snake eggs either kill people or hatch more snakes (v. 5b).
 - (a) “Whether you try to eat the eggs or crush them, the results are equally deadly.”¹⁴
- (9) They are not able to clothe themselves with the spider webs (v. 6a).
 - (a) **Job 8:14** 14 His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider’s web.
 - (b) “If you try to clothe yourself in such a society’s schemes, you will find them as ephemeral and yet as difficult to get free of as a spiderweb.”¹⁵
- (10) Men cannot cover themselves with what they make (v. 6b).
 - (a) **Ge 3:7** 7 Then the eyes of both [Adam and Eve] were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.
- (11) They commit works of injustice and deeds of violence (v. 6c).
 - (a) “What turns a productive society into a pernicious one? Any number of things, but above all, devouring self-interest as expressed in the words *iniquity* and *violence*. Taken together, they mean that what is right is twisted to be what I want, and that any means of obtaining what I want, up to and including physical force, is always justified. Given the reality of sin, unless a supernatural way is found to promote genuine concern for one another and a determination to do right regardless of immediate payoff, human society, far from being the peaceable kingdom of Is 11 and 65, will produce only snake eggs and spiderwebs.”¹⁶
- (12) Their feet run to evil (v. 7a).
 - (a) The actions of Israel’s hands and feet are only an expression of something interior.¹⁷
 - (b) **Pr 1:16** 16 ...For their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.
 - (c) **Ro 3:15-17** 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood. 16 In their paths are ruin and misery, 17 and the way of peace they have not known.
- (13) They are swift to shed innocent blood (v. 7b).
- (14) Their thought processes are thought processes of injustice (v. 7c).

¹⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 515.

¹⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 515.

¹⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 515.

¹⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 516.

- (a) **Is 55:7-9** 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts/intents/plans (מַחְשָׁבֹתָיו). Let him return to Yahweh, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares Yahweh. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- (b) The ways and the thoughts of God must replace the ways and thoughts of man. Reform will not do. Replacement is the only hope.¹⁸
- (15) They habitually cause oppression and destruction (v. 7d).
 - (a) I.e., killing the unborn has become normalised.
- (16) They don't recognise the ways of peace (v. 8a).
- (17) There is no justice in their tracks/paths (לְמַעַל) (v. 8b).
 - (a) לְמַעַל: "a **track** firmed with stones or fill" (*HALOT*, 606).
- (18) They have made their own roads crooked (v. 8c).
 - (a) **Is 26:7** 7 The waggon tracks (לְמַעַל) of the righteous are level. You make level the way of the righteous.
 - (b) **Pr 2:14-15** 14 ... Who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, 15 men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways.
 - (c) **Pr 10:9** 9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.
- (19) No one who treads on these crooked roads knows shalom/wholeness (v. 8d).
 - (a) **Is 48:22** 22 There is no shalom, says Yahweh, for the wicked.
 - (b) **Is 57:21** 21 There is no shalom, says my God, for the wicked.
 - (c) All man's attempts at shalom without God are futile. God's highways are peace, redemption, guidance, confidence, restoration, and completion, but man's highways are destruction, confusion, discord, strife, and disintegration.¹⁹
- e. Total Depravity.
 - (1) Man is wholly evil. He is thoroughly wicked. Every aspect of man—mind, emotion, will, and relationships—is broken. Broken people result in broken communities and nations.
 - (2) **Is 1:5** 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
 - (3) There are three types of sinners: immoral, moral, and religious. The only difference between the first type and the second and third types is that the sins of the first type are obvious, whereas the sins of the second and third types are not so obvious.
 - (a) New Zealand does not have so many immoral sinners or religious sinners. She mainly has moral sinners (see Ro 2:1-16).

3. The Results of Sin in Individual Lives (Is 59:9-13).

¹⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 516.

¹⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 516.

- a. **Is 59:9-13** 9 Therefore justice (מִשְׁפָּט) is far from us, and righteousness (הַצְדִּיקָה) does not overtake us. We wait in hope (קוּה) for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. 10 We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes. We stumble at noon as in the twilight. Among those in full vigour we are like dead men. 11 We all growl like bears. We moan and moan like doves. We wait in hope (קוּה) for justice (מִשְׁפָּט), but there is none, for salvation (יְשׁוּעָה), but it is far from us. 12 For our moral crimes (עֲוֹנוֹת) are multiplied before you, and our sins (חַטּוֹת) testify against us. For our moral crimes (עֲוֹנוֹת) are with us, and we know our sin-guilt (עוֹן)— 13 behaving as criminals (פֹּשְׁעִים), denying (כַּחַשׁ) Yahweh, and turning back (גָּבַח) from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart (לִב) lying words.
- b. As a result of their pervasive sin, Israel's people recognise:
- (1) Justice is far from them (v. 9a).
 - (a) Note Isaiah now begins to use “we” and “us.” Whether he is directly implicated in the sins or not, he is surely a participant in their results.²⁰
 - 1) **Is 6:5** 5 And I [Isaiah] said: Woe is me! For I am lost. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips....
 - (b) The “we” indicates the people are now recognising their condition, lamenting it in vv. 9-11 and confessing it in vv. 12-15.²¹
 - (c) There must come a point when we admit the seriousness of our sins and our helplessness to clear our guilt or overcome the power of sin in our live.
 - (2) Righteousness does not overtake them (v. 9b).
 - (3) They wait in hope for light but get only darkness (v. 9c).
 - (a) **Is 60:2** 2 For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples, but Yahweh will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.
 - (4) They grope around as blind men (v. 10a).
 - (a) **Dt 28:29** 29 ...And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.
 - (b) **Job 5:14** 14 They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night.
 - (c) **Job 12:25** 25 They grope in the dark without light, and he makes them stagger like a drunken man.
 - (5) They stumble in the day as if it were night (v. 10b).
 - (a) **Zep 1:17** 17 I will bring distress on humanity, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against Yahweh....
 - (6) Although in the time of full strength, they are like a dead man (v. 10c).
 - (a) E.g.: my days partying at KU when I was age 19-21.
 - (7) They growl like beasts and moan like birds (v. 11a).
 - (a) **Is 38:14** 14 Like a swallow or a crane I chirp. I moan like a dove.

²⁰ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 519.

²¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 518.

- (b) **Eze 7:16** 16 And if any survivors escape, they will be on the mountains, like doves of the valleys, all of them moaning, each one over his iniquity.
- (8) They wait in hope for justice and salvation, but it never comes (v. 11b).
 - (a) The more man searches for justice and tries to produce it on his own strength, the more distant it becomes.²²
 - (b) This is why we must say no to social justice warriors. It's not that what they want is bad; it's their ability to do it that's the problem.
 - (c) So many idealists hope in vain for a secular humanist or Marxist society that promises a perfectly just, classless society that is impossible. It's usually through the concentration of power in the hands of the state. The problem is the state is run by people. This is the problem with what Thomas Sowell calls the "unconstrained vision" of human nature.
- c. The people of Israel are now fully aware of their moral crimes and sin-guilt (v. 12).
 - (1) **Ps 51:3** 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
 - (2) When we finally become aware of our condition, we can then see God's power to unleashed in our lives. So long as we are ignorant of our sins, try to explain them away, or blame them on somebody else, we can have no real hope for change. "It is only when we agree with God's assessment of our condition that God's curative powers may be released in us...."²³
- d. On the basis of their sinful condition, they:
 - (1) Behave as moral criminals (v. 13a).
 - (2) Deny Yahweh (v. 13b).
 - (3) Turn back from following him (v. 13c).
 - (a) **Is 50:5** 5 Lord Yahweh has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward.
 - (4) Speak oppression and revolt (v. 13d).
 - (5) Think up and speak lies from the heart (v. 13e).
 - (a) **Mt 15:18-20** 18 ...What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person.
- e. We are not bad because society is bad (Rousseau). Society is bad because we are bad (Chesterton). Society will never change until our individual hearts are renewed.

4. The Results of Sin in the Community (Is 59:14-15).

- a. **Is 59:14-15** 14 Justice (מִשְׁפָּט) is turned back, and righteousness (צְדָקָה) stands far away, for truth (אֱמֻנָה) has stumbled in the public squares, and honesty (יִכְרֹם) cannot enter. 15 Truth (אֱמֻנָה) is lacking, and he who departs from evil (רָע) makes himself a prey.
- b. The result of the combined individual sins of Israel's people is pervasive community sin. There is no:

²² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 521.

²³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 522.

- (1) Justice (v. 14a).
- (2) Righteousness (v. 14b).
 - (a) “Whenever people try to live a lie, especially the big one, that we can be fully human without dependence on God, a false impression of reality is given. And when life is rooted in falsehood, justice and righteousness rapidly become an impossibility.”²⁴
 - (b) When we try to solve all our problems on our own, without reference to God or his word, we only make the problem worse. This is the problem with all our efforts at solving the mental health crisis. We break apart the traditional family and then throw money at this crisis. It will not work.
- (3) Truth (v. 14c, 15 a).
 - (a) “[L]ies are first told because they are expedient, but in the end because truth cannot even be recognized. The heart has become completely corrupted.”²⁵
- (4) Honesty (14d).
- c. The righteous became the enemy of the people (v. 15b).
 - (1) “Unless people are committed to be faithful to each other and also to adhere to a standard of integrity that is exterior to themselves, justice will always fall prey to devouring self-interest. ... Because there is neither faithfulness nor integrity in the society, life quickly falls to the lowest common denominator of self-seeking: be crooked to someone else before he is crooked to you. The person who does not choose that way opens himself or herself up to being taken advantage of in the most egregious ways. For social harmony to exist, all persons must be committed to the bare standard of truth in all relationships. Where truth is missing, righteousness must be chosen, not because it will pay off in the short run... but because it is right. Indeed, in a collapsing society, those who *turn aside from evil* may well be the most apparent losers.”²⁶

5. Yahweh’s Response to Sin (Is 59:15-19).

- a. **Is 59:15-19** 15 Yahweh saw it, and it was evil in his eyes that there was no justice (מִשְׁפָּט). 16 He saw that there was no man (אִישׁ), and wondered that there was no one to intercede (פָּנֵעַ). Then his own arm brought him salvation (יִשְׁעַ), and his righteousness (צְדָקָה) upheld him. 17 He put on righteousness (צְדָקָה) as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation (יְשׁוּעָה) on his head. He put on garments of revenge (נִקְמָה) for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal (קִנְיָאָה) as a cloak. 18 According to their deeds, so will he repay (שָׁלַם), wrath (חֲמָה) to his adversaries, repayment (גְּמוּלָה) to his enemies. To the coastlands he will render repayment (גְּמוּלָה). 19 So they shall fear (יִרְא) the name of Yahweh from the west and his glory from the rising of the sun. For he [Messiah] will come like a rushing river (נָהָר), which the wind/breath/Spirit (רוּחַ) of Yahweh drives on (נוֹס).

²⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 523.

²⁵ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 523-524.

²⁶ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 524.

- b. Yahweh, from his vantage point, sees the reality and results of Israel's sin (v. 15a).
 - (1) The great hope of the world is that God sees and cares.²⁷
- c. It is evil in his eyes there is no justice (v. 15b).
 - (1) "Biblically speaking, *evil* is that which opposes creation purposes (note the repetition of the antonym 'good' in Gen. 1)."²⁸
 - (2) Under atheism and pantheism, there is no basis for calling anything above as truly evil. See *God's Existence*.
- d. Among men, there is no one to solve the sin problem (v. 16a).
 - (1) This is a very important biblical theme.
 - (a) **2 Ki 14:26** 26 For Yahweh saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel.
 - (b) **Is 51:18** 18 There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne. There is none to take her by the hand among all the sons she has brought up.
 - (c) **Is 63:5** 5 I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation (עֲשָׂה), and my wrath upheld me.
 - (d) **Eze 22:30** 30 And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none.
 - (2) The lie of autonomous humanism says we can help ourselves out of our predicament.
 - (a) I.e., I thought I could save myself when I was young and on Dec. 31, 2000.
 - (3) Israel is incapable of helping herself. Man is incapable of helping himself. We are incapable of helping ourselves. I am incapable of helping myself. You are incapable of helping yourself.
- e. Yahweh himself must deal with sin and bring in salvation and righteousness (v. 16b).
 - (1) Importantly, he does so on his own initiative.
 - (a) **Jn 3:16** 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son....
- f. Before he does so, he must "put on" his armour as a "warrior" (v. 17):
 - (a) "This is the ultimate development of the Divine Warrior motif in the Bible: God comes to destroy the final enemy of what he has created: not the monster Chaos, but the monster Sin."²⁹
 - (2) The breastplate of righteousness (v. 17a).
 - (3) The helmet of salvation/Yeshua (v. 17b).
 - (a) **1 Th 5:8** 8 But because we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.
 - (b) **Eph 6:13-17** 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take

²⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 528.

²⁸ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 528.

²⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 527.

up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. . . .

- (4) Garments of vengeance (v 17c).
- (5) Cloak of zeal (v. 17d).
 - (a) **Is 9:7** 7 Of the increase of [Messiah's] government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.
 - (b) No offensive weapons are mentioned. Franz Delitzsch suggests this is because all God needs to wreak vengeance on his enemies and work salvation for his people is his mighty arm.³⁰
- g. Fully clothed, he will repay his enemies with wrath, according to their deeds (v. 18a).
 - (1) **Is 63:4-6** 4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. 5 I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled, but there was no one to uphold. So my own arm brought me salvation, and my wrath upheld me. 6 I trampled down the peoples in my anger. I made them drunk in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.
 - (2) This includes his enemies from among the nations (v. 18b).
 - (a) **Is 41:1-5** 1 Listen to me in silence, O coastlands. Let the peoples renew their strength. Let them approach, then let them speak. Let us together draw near for judgment. . . .5 The coastlands have seen and are afraid. The ends of the earth tremble. They have drawn near and come.
- h. As a result, all people from west to east will fear Yahweh's name and glory (v. 19a).
 - (1) **Ps 25:14** 14 The friendship of Yahweh is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.
- i. Yahweh will come like a rushing river, driven on by the breath of Yahweh (v. 19b).
 - (1) **Is 30:27-28** 27 Behold, the name of Yahweh comes from afar, burning with his anger, and in thick rising smoke. His lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire. 28 His breath is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads astray.

6. Israel's Redeemer (Is 59:20).

- a. **Is 59:20** 20 And a Redeemer (יְגֹאֵל) will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn (שׁוּב) from crime/wrongdoing (עֲוֹנוֹת), declares Yahweh.
- b. To the remnant of Israel who turns from sin, Yahweh promises a Redeemer (v. 20).
 - (1) **Joe 2:32** 32 And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom Yahweh calls.
 - (2) **Ro 11:26-27** 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob, 27 and, This will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

³⁰ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 529.

- (3) “It is not remarkable that God should be angry at the corruption of his purposes for creation. What is remarkable is that he should persevere in compassion toward those who have become corrupt.”³¹
- (a) Illustration: children immediately dirtying up the house you have just spent hours cleaning.
- (b) **Ex 34:6-7** 6 Yahweh passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, 7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving sin-guilt (עֲוֹן), moral crime (פְּשָׁעַ), and sin (חַטָּאת), but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.
- (c) **Ps 103:8-10** 8 Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loyal love. 9 He will not always prosecute (רִיב), nor will he keep his anger forever. 10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- (d) See *God’s Attributes*.
- (4) But Jacob must want Yahweh’s blessing badly enough to choose God’s way.³²
- (a) **Ge 32:26** 26 Then he said, Let me go, for the day has broken. But Jacob said, I will not let you go unless you bless me.
- (b) See *Order of Salvation*.

7. Result for the Remnant (Is 59:21).

- a. **Is 59:21** 21 And as for me, this is my [New] covenant (בְּרִית) with them, says Yahweh. My Spirit (רוּחַ) that is upon you, and my words (דְּבָר) that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, out of the mouth of your seed, or out of the mouth of your seed’s seed, says Yahweh, from now and to eternity.
- b. Yahweh has a New covenant in store for the remnant of Israel (v. 21a). He will put:
- (1) His Spirit upon them (v. 21b).
- (a) **Nu 11:29** 29 But Moses said to him, Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all Yahweh’s people were prophets, that Yahweh would put his Spirit on them!
- (b) **Eze 36:27** 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
- (c) **Joe 2:29** 29 Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.
- (2) His words in their mouths (v. 21c).
- (a) Isaiah’s unclean lips were cleansed so that he might speak Yahweh’s message Israel (Is 6). Now Israel’s unclean lips will be cleansed so that she might speak Yahweh’s message to the world.³³

³¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 530.

³² John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 530.

³³ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 531.

- (b) **Is 51:16** 16 And I [Yahweh] have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens, laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, You are my people.
 - (c) **Jer 31:31-34** 31 Behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will make a New covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the [Mosaic] covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares Yahweh. 33 For this is the [New] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put my Torah within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother saying, Know Yahweh, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. For I will forgive their guilt (יָצַו), and I will remember their sin (תִּשְׁכַּח) no more.
 - (d) **He 8:10** 10 For this is the [New] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
 - 1) The words of our mouth come from the thoughts of our heart.
- (3) The three primary aspects of the New covenant are the forgiveness of sin, the circumcision of the heart, and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. We have all three aspects here (vv. 20-21).
- c. The remnant's descendants will speak Yahweh's words forever (v. 21c).
 - (1) Yahweh redeems Israel in order for her to be his servant to the nations, in order that all nations might be drawn to Zion (Is 2:2-3). For this purpose to be realized, Israel's sin must be defeated. Her character and words must be pure. When this takes place, the glory of Yahweh will have risen in Israel and all the nations will come to the brightness of her rising (Is 60:1-3).³⁴

8. Application.

- a. For unbelievers.
 - (1) Turn from human autonomy to Yahweh's Servant, the Redeemer, Yeshua (v. 20).
 - (2) See *Three Phases of Salvation*.
- b. For believers.
 - (1) Live the New Covenant life (v. 21).

³⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 531-532.