

Review

In our study of Isaiah, we have seen that for the last two and a half chapters, God has been rebuking His people for their sin, but reassuring them that if they repent, He can heal and deliver them. We pick up in chapter 59, verse one...

59:1-3 Separated From God

In English, shorthand is a method of writing using symbols and abbreviations to take dictation. But a shortened hand in Hebrew describes a lack of power. Because the arm and hand were symbols of authority and strength, a shortened arm or hand demonstrated the opposite.

God is not lacking power to save. He is also not lacking in hearing ability to hear prayers. However, sin does make him deaf and keeps Him from reaching out to save. Our bloody hands keep God from wanting to get anywhere near us.

I'm sure that this passage is what James had in mind when he wrote,

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

59:4-8 Confusion, Lies, And Mischief

In Isaiah's day, honesty and righteousness had become unheard of. Even in the courts of law, it was all about smoke and mirrors. It was all about winning, not about justice.

It had become then just like our own court system is today. Guilt or innocence doesn't seem to matter anymore. It's the person with the best lawyer that wins. The threat of prosecution for perjury means nothing, because almost everybody is lying to make their case. Evidence isn't admissible because of some ludicrous loophole, and criminals are set free on technicalities. Crimes that should be punishable by death are dealt with by slaps on the wrist.

Take the case of 50-year-old Richard Thompson of Lincoln, Nebraska. Three days ago (05/25/2006), he was convicted of sexually assault-

ing a 12-year-old girl. He should have gone to prison for ten years, but the judge said that he'd never survive... because he's too short. Judge Kristine Cecava of the Cheyenne County District court said that at 5'1", poor Richard would be in danger in prison. And so, he's free on probation.

Justice had become extinct in ancient Israel as well. Everyone's path was crooked.

59:9-11 We Hope For Brightness, But Walk In Gloom

Everybody I talk to wants justice. And yet, none of us really do anything about the injustice of our courts. Everybody says they want to see America become more righteous. But none of us really take a stand for righteousness. Indecent entertainment is utilized as much by Christians as by the rest of the population.

So, we hope for light while we take in darkness. Again, that's where the Israelites were then. They hoped for salvation, but it was far from them. They wished things were different, but wouldn't do anything to change it.

59:12-15a Our Sins Testify Against Us

Isaiah prays to the Lord and confesses the sin of the nation.

Every sin is committed in front of God. They give testimony against us. The writer of Hebrews said,

Heb. 4:13 ...all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

When we make a decision to wilfully sin, we are turning away from God, rebelling and revolting against Him.

And in times when righteous people are scarce, someone who stands up for truth and practices goodness becomes a target.

59:15b-16 No Man To Intercede But God

There have been times in earth's history when God looked upon mankind's sinfulness and slammed down judgment. We read about the first time in the book of Genesis:

Gen. 6:5-7 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

But the time came when...

Is. 59:15b-16 ...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.

Instead of destroying His people, God chose to save them. Since no one was able to intercede for them, He did it Himself.

Remember that we learned back in chapter 51 that "the arm of the Lord" is a title of Jesus Christ. It is Jesus who would bring salvation to God's people by being their mediator.

59:17-19 The Armor Of God

Paul wrote in Ephesians six,

Eph. 6:10-17 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARA-

TION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Often, preachers will expound upon Paul's writing, describing that as he sat in prison, chained between two soldiers, he started to look at the Christian life as the armor which the soldiers were wearing. The problem with that concept is that Paul didn't come up with the metaphor: God did. The breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation were figures of speech that God used about 750 years before Paul wrote Ephesians.

Paul used this imagery to talk about the armor that the Christian is to put on to be able to stand firm. But don't forget, it is the armor OF GOD. He is gearing up to do battle against sin. To wreak vengeance against wickedness with His zeal. At the second coming of Christ, the adversaries of God will experience His wrath.

59:20-21 A Redeemer Will Come

When Jesus returns to judge His adversaries, He will also redeem the Jews. And from then on, God's people will never depart from Him. The Word of God will be taught to and treasured by every generation.