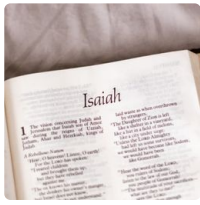


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Isaiah 58 - 60



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah 58-60 discusses the importance of fasting, but not as a means of legalistic behavior. Instead, it is seen as an act of mourning or deep emotion. The chapters also discuss the need to cry out against unjust slavery and remove the burden of oppression from those who suffer. The passage ultimately speaks of Christ coming to wage war against adversaries and bring glory to His remnant.

Transcript

Alright, we're turning to Isaiah 58 and chapters 58-66, the closing nine chapters of the book, make up the final section. We've been saying all along that the portion of Isaiah that we call the book of comfort, which is chapters 40-66, divides into three sections of equal length, nine chapters each, and we've covered the first two of those and the final one remains, and begins at chapter 58. Now this chapter is rather famous for being a chapter devoted to the subject of fasting.

And the Bible doesn't give very much teaching about fasting in general. Fasting is abstaining from food. And when Christians learn that there is such a thing as fasting, they search the scriptures for insight as to why you fast, when you fast, how you fast, and they find essentially nothing.

There's almost no teaching in the scripture at all on the subject of fasting, except that people do it, and that Christians do it. We find in Acts chapter 13 that before the apostles Barnabas and Saul were sent out, the leaders of the church were fasting and ministering to the Lord, and the Holy Spirit spoke to them. Fasting is something that Paul and Barnabas did, I think, before they selected elders.

Jesus indicated that his disciples would, in fact, fast. Jesus never commanded it. He assumed it.

In Matthew chapter 9, when the disciples of John the Baptist and of the Pharisees asked Jesus, why don't your disciples fast when we do? The other religious people had fasts. The Pharisees fasted two days a week. And Jesus' disciples did not fast.

And so these who were fasting asked Jesus, why don't they? And Jesus said, it's not really proper for people, for the guests at a wedding to fast while the bridegroom is with them, in other words, during the festivities. But he says, when the bridegroom is taken away, then they will fast. Now, this, of course, is not the same thing as a command to disciples, but it's a prediction.

He said, my disciples, in fact, will fast. And in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, when you do alms, don't be like the hypocrites. When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites.

When you fast, don't be like the hypocrites. Notice when you fast. He didn't command them to fast.

He assumed they would. Fasting is something that was so universally a part of piety in Judaism and in many religions. It apparently was a part of what Jesus expected his disciples would do as well.

How frequently? We're never told. Some Christians adopt a habit of fasting once or twice a week. Some do it far less often, not even once a year.

Some Christians have never fasted. The Bible doesn't say how often one should fast. And when you adopt a pattern of fasting on a schedule, some people have found this profitable.

I did not. When I was younger, I decided I had neglected fasting all my life when I first discovered it in Scripture. So I decided to fast one day a week.

And then at the end of every month, I'd fast three days. And that seemed like that would sort of be good enough. And it was.

It was definitely good enough. But it wasn't good enough in the sense that it didn't really increase my spirituality. It was definitely not fasting for me.

There was there were sometimes it was a spiritually uplifting experience. Other times it was just a drudgery. And it was just something that distracted me from prayer and things like that.

Sometimes fasting can intensify your prayer. Sometimes it seems to distract from it. And I decided and I think I had New Testament authority on that.

And for that matter, Old Testament authority, too, that fasting is not something you schedule as a legalistic structured part of your spiritual life. You fast when when it's appropriate to fast. Jesus said the children of the bride chamber do not fast while the bridegroom is with them.

Actually, the way he said it was this. He said the children of the bride chamber don't mourn while the bridegroom is with them. But when he's taken away, then they will fast.

Jesus used the word fast and mourn as synonyms. And in the Old Testament, fasting was never commanded except one day a year at the Day of Atonement. The Jews were supposed to fast on the Day of Atonement once a year.

However, they added additional fasts in the time of Zechariah. The Jews had adopted four additional annual fasts just by their own tradition. They were mourning over things like the siege of Jerusalem and the fall of the temple and the breach of the walls of Jerusalem.

And the anniversaries for those days had become annual fasts for the Jews in the exile. And fasting was something you often did when you're mourning for the dead. But it seems to me that it's most organic and most natural to fast when you really don't feel like eating because you're mourning.

I mean, mourning, times of deep emotion are the times when people would skip meals and fast. Occasionally, maybe they did it legalistically, but God didn't require it. And it was something that, like Jesus said, you mourn when there's something to mourn about.

You don't mourn when there's not something to mourn about. Now, Christians have much to mourn about. Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn.

They shall be comforted. We mourn over the state of the world. We mourn over our own imperfections and sins.

We mourn over people we know who are lost. And therefore, there's many occasions for us to have legitimate fasting, to be driven to fast and to pray. Jesus said, depending on which manuscripts you consult, in Matthew 17, when he was talking with the disciples, why couldn't we cast that demon out? Jesus said, this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting.

Now, admittedly, the term and fasting is omitted from some manuscripts. But the point is, there was a combination of prayer and fasting often. Daniel prayed and fasted in Daniel chapter 10 and apparently had some impact on a spiritual war that was going on that he was not even aware of, if you read Daniel 10.

And so fasting, when it is appropriately joined to prayer, seems to have an impact. When it is the true reflection of a broken heart, of mourning over something that is not as it should be and which you're beseeching God to change. And therefore, fasting, I think, is a spiritual thing that you do when you're spiritually led to do it.

And I believe in fasting. But the Bible doesn't say that we fast on a schedule. That becomes, usually, for people who do it, legalistic.

And I'm not going to say that any of you who may do that are legalists. It's just that some people make a legalistic habit of it and sometimes they'll find it to be a spiritually

uplifting experience, sometimes not so much. In chapter 58, we read that the Jews fasted.

Why they were fasting, we're not told. They may have been referring to their fasting on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, although it may be other fasting they did, trying to incur God's favor. The problem was, and we see this, of course, the same as in chapter 1 of Isaiah, just like the other religious things they did, it was not pleasing to God.

In chapter 1, God said, the incense you bring to me, the sacrifices you offer, they repulse me. They don't do anything for me. Now, this doesn't mean that God was against sacrifices.

It means that because these people's hands were full of blood and they were unjust in all their relationships and dealings, that their shallow religious observances didn't make an impact on God. In fact, they disgusted him because in doing it, they were pretending that they were good people and they weren't living good lives. And the Bible says that God finds the sacrifice of a wicked man to be an abomination.

Now, what Isaiah points out is these people were fasting but not getting any results from God and they were wondering why. And he said, well, the problem is, although you're fasting, you're still sinning. You're still living sinful lives and you're oppressing your servants and you're cheating people.

And you're violent with people that you're in conflict with and so forth. And what God actually says is you need to stop that. Now, there was a book written in, I suppose it was in the 60s or 70s, called God's Chosen Fast.

And the title was taken from this chapter where God says in verse 5, is it a fast that I have chosen? Or is this not, I think King James says something like, is this, oh, it's verse 6, is this not the fast that I have chosen? God's chosen fast. This book was advocating fasting, but pointing out that this chapter said that in addition to fasting, you should be doing these other things. And I and most preachers I've heard took it that way for a long time.

But as I studied Isaiah, I began to wonder whether that is true. Whether Isaiah is saying you should be fasting, but accompanying it with this repentance. It sounds as I read it that God's saying, I've never asked you to fast anyway.

You're fasting from food is not what I've ever asked you to do. I've asked you to fast from evil, fast from sin. And I believe what he's saying is the fast that God is looking for is not abstaining from food, but abstaining from evil behavior.

And that he's not necessarily advocating fasting from food in here at all. They're already doing that. I don't believe he's saying you need to add to your fasting from food, fasting from evil.

I think what he's saying is God has never really commanded you to fast from food, but he has commanded you to fast from evil. So let's do that kind of fasting now. Let's fast from sinning.

And we read, cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet. Tell my people their transgression in the house of Jacob, their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness, meaning as if they were a nation that did righteousness.

He says, and who did not forsake the ordinance of their God, which they in fact had done. They ask of me the ordinances of justice. They take delight in approaching God.

Why have we fasted? They say, and you have not seen. Why have we afflicted our souls? And you take no notice. Now, in the Old Testament, afflicting the soul is a synonym for fasting.

You'll find it used in a number of Old Testament places. David in the Psalms talks about afflicting his soul. It's a reference to fasting.

And you can see it's used in parallel with fasting here as well. Why did we do this? And you're not paying attention, God. With fasting, we're afflicting our souls.

You're not answering. You haven't taken notice. And the answer is given in verse three.

In fact, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and exploit all your laborers. Indeed, you fast for strife and debate and to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day to make your voice heard on high.

Is it a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul, to bow down his head like a bulrush, to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Now, these things, afflicting the soul, meaning abstaining from food, bowing your head like a bulrush, spreading out sackcloth and ashes, these were the typical expressions of grief and repentance that accompanied fasting. And yet they are outward. They're all outward actions.

They don't really have any effect on the moral behavior of a person. You can bow your head. You can sit in sackcloth and ashes.

You can abstain from food. And all the time, your heart's still a rebel against God. He says, while you're fasting, you're still oppressing your servants.

You haven't changed your behavior except your eating habits. And he says that's not what God's interested in. He says in verse six, is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness.

To undo the heavy burdens. To let the oppressed go free. And that you break every

yoke.

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry? And that you bring into your house the poor who are cast out? When you see the naked, that you cover him? And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Now, this is what he's saying I want you to do instead of or in addition to your fasting. You can fast if you want to or not. What God is looking for is something entirely different.

He's looking for compassion to the poor. He wants to see you treating your brother like he's your brother. And if he's naked, you clothe him.

If he's homeless, you take him in. If he's hungry, you feed him. Better to feed your brother than to abstain from food yourself.

There are things you can do that are more practical than fasting. That would be, you know, more desirable. More helpful to your neighbor.

Loosing the bond of wickedness. I'm not sure what that means. Perhaps it means unjust slavery.

The heavy burdens. Let the oppressed go free. Whatever it means, it means you're supposed to treat your brother in a right way.

And promote his liberty and promote his well-being. In other words, what God's looking for is your behavior toward your brother to be loving. And, you know, the eating part is not that much of an issue.

Now there's a promise made. Verse 8. Then, in other words, when you do this, instead of what you're now doing. Your light shall break forth as the morning.

Your healing shall spring forth speedily. And your righteousness shall go before you. The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you should call, and the Lord will answer. You should cry, and he will say, Here I am. If you take away the yoke from your midst.

The yoke meaning the burden of slavery. He may be actually telling them to free their slaves. Or at least the heavy yoke.

The heavy burden he speaks of in verse 6 is to be removed. Put that away. Stop that.

The pointing of the finger. Apparently accusation of people, maybe falsely. The speaking wickedness.

Which probably lies and false accusations. If you extend your soul to the hungry. And satisfy the afflicted soul.

Then your light shall dawn in the darkness. And your darkness shall be as the noon day. The Lord will guide you continually.

And satisfy your soul in drought. And strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered garden.

And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those among you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations.

And you shall be called the repairer of the breach. The restorer of streets to dwell in. Now this is kind of interesting.

Because it talks about building the waste places. But this is no doubt spiritual. It may be that they would take it literally.

Because if this is picturing the people at the end of the Babylonian exile. Who are crying out for deliverance. And they are going to be delivered.

When they are truly repentant. Then they would go back to Jerusalem. And see the ruins there of the old city.

And rebuild the old waste places. However in chapter 61. Which Jesus identified with his own ministry.

Remember chapter 61 verse 1. The spirit of the Lord God is upon me. Because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. And so forth.

Jesus said this was fulfilled in their hearing. In verse 4 of that chapter he says. And they shall rebuild the old ruins.

And they shall raise up the former desolations. They shall repair the ruined cities. The desolations of many generations.

Sounds like exactly the same thing. That is promised there to those. Who would be repairers of the breached walls and so forth.

Now this apparently speaks of a spiritual building. And there is every reason why we should understand it as such. Because the natural return of the exiles from Babylon.

Is treated as a type of salvation for us today. And of course the building of the temple. And the building of the city.

Is like the building of the church. And Paul said for example. He came to Corinth he says I laid the foundation.

Another minister comes along and builds on it. And so in Ephesians chapter 2. Paul said that the church is built on the foundation of apostles and prophets. Jesus Christ being the

chief cornerstone.

In whom the whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Peter said in 1 Peter 2.5. That we are like living stones being built together as a spiritual house. Some there are workers on this project.

And they are people like Paul. And Apollos and those who build the church. They go to a town they lay a foundation.

They start building they add bricks. By adding souls. Living stones.

And so the church is a building under construction. And it will be properly built. In the old manner.

The ancient ways. The original way. That the apostles built it when people are.

Tuned in with God. Not simply by fasting but by. Renovating their behavior.

And behaving in a righteous and just way toward other people. That is what God is really looking for. Remember.

He says in. Hosea 6.6. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. God desires people to show mercy and compassion toward their fellow man.

Not offer animal sacrifices so much. And so again. Everywhere in the Old Testament where the prophets speak on this.

They make it clear that God is not. Looking for the animal sacrifices the incense the outward. Trappings of worship the ritual the fasting.

He's looking for change behavior. Change hearts and behavior. And that's what he's saying here.

And those who change. Those who actually conform to God's standards. Will be used by him to build up.

The old foundations that are broken down. There's a very real sense in which the church. In the time since the apostles has seen a deterioration.

And ruining. Of what the apostles built. Especially in the Middle Ages of course.

Much of the apostolic church. Cease to exist almost. In the time of the papacy and all that.

And there has been some restoration since then. But not completely. There still needs to be the.

Rebuilding of the old places and the foundations of many generations. There are breaches in the wall that still need to be repaired. And God says you will be used for that.

At least those who come from you will do that. If you are. Fasting from evil rather than just.

Having a ritual abstinence from food. If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath. From doing your pleasure on my holy day.

And call the Sabbath a delight. The holy day of the Lord honorable. And shall honor him not doing your own ways.

Nor finding your own pleasure. Nor speaking your own words. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord.

And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth. And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Now. Notice how many times he's concerned about. People doing their own pleasure.

Back in verse 3. When he's. First starting to say what's wrong with them. He says at the end of that verse.

In fact in the day that you fast. You find pleasure. And exploit your labors.

Now he says that. You need to abstain from doing your pleasure. On the Sabbath day.

In verse 13. And at the end of verse 13. And you shall honor him not doing your own ways.

Nor finding your own pleasure. The whole issue is. Who are you living to please? Are you living to please God? Or are you living to please yourself? And apparently those who are living to please themselves.

God just takes it for granted. That's not the right thing to do. That's the whole idea of fasting.

Is that you're. In a sense depriving yourself of some of your pleasure. Supposedly.

But in the day you're fasting. You're still living for your own pleasure. In other respects.

The Sabbath was set aside. So that people would. You know.

Devote their attention to God. And away from their own pleasure. Of course the Sabbath.

In the Old Testament. Was just one day. To do so.

In the New Testament. Every day. Is like the Sabbath.

Every day is a holy day. Like Paul said in Romans 14. Verse 5. One man esteems one day above another.

Another man esteems every day alike. And says let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. Romans 14.5. But.

When a person esteems every day alike. It means they esteem every day. Sort of like a Sabbath.

As the Lord's holy day. It's a day in which I'm not seeking my own pleasure. I'm seeking God's pleasure.

The idea is to please God. Not self. And that is what.

The Sabbath was a single day. That they set aside for that. I guess to do it every day.

Was asking too much of people. Before the time of the Holy Spirit being given to them. But now that we do have the Holy Spirit.

Of course. We are enabled. To just seek God's pleasure.

In our life. And put aside our pursuit of our own. Now chapter 59.

Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save. Nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear. This follows naturally on the previous.

How come we're fasting and God doesn't hear us. God's not saving us. God's not responding.

Well, it's not really a problem on God's side here. God's not hard of hearing. His hand isn't withered.

He is not unable to stretch it out and help you. The problem is your iniquities have separated you from your God. And your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.

And it's not that he can't hear. It's that he won't. Because you have established a barrier by your behavior between himself and you.

For your hands are defiled with blood. That was a complaint way back in chapter 1. When he was saying, don't bring any more sacrifices to me. Don't lift up those hands to pray to me.

He says in verse 15 of chapter 1. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of

blood.

This means bloodshed. That means there was murder going on. In Jerusalem.

And it probably wasn't just criminal murder, you know, thugs on the street. It was probably more institutionalized murder. A little like we have in abortion in our society.

It's institutionalized murder. It's not some kind of a criminal in a dark alley waiting and lurking to seize a victim. It's more like you can just walk into a doctor, a respectable doctor, and just have your baby murdered.

But in their day, I'm not sure what form it took. It probably wasn't abortion. It may well have been that the people in power did the kinds of things that King Ahab and Jezebel did.

When they wanted a vineyard of a neighbor, Naboth, and he didn't want to get rid of it, Jezebel had the guy killed by false witnesses saying that he was a crook and that he blasphemed God. And so he was stoned to death and they seized his property. People in power often will just trample upon those who are powerless and take what they have.

And sometimes it's at the expense of the lives of the persons who are being trampled. And let's face it, tyrants really place a low value on human life. As people like Hitler and Stalin and Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, showed.

They killed millions of people and probably slept just fine at night. When people are tyrants, they often just walk right over people and kill people and don't have any heart for it. And that apparently was going on somehow in Jerusalem.

It's not like there was war in the streets and people were being slaughtered that way. It was some other way that was simply institutionalized injustice that led to innocent people dying. And God saw their blood on the hands of the oppressors.

Your hands are defiled with blood, your fingers with iniquity, your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity. These lip-speaking lies are very possibly lies in court, false witness against persons that they were taking advantage of, very commonplace. In fact, the command, you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, probably had its first application to courtroom swearing.

You swear in the name of the Lord that something is true. And if you're lying, then you're taking that name in vain. And in all likelihood, God realized that the courts were the places where unscrupulous people learned to manipulate and seemingly in legal ways get what they want from helpless victims who are too poor to manipulate the system.

They can hire false witnesses. Jesus was condemned when the Sanhedrin brought in false witnesses. The Sanhedrin hired false witnesses to speak against Stephen.

Both Jesus and Stephen got killed as a result, and it's not likely that they're the only ones that Jerusalem ever did that to. No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies.

They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch viper's eggs and weave the spider's web. He who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed, a viper breaks out.

The webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works. Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Now, this laying eggs, viper eggs, and weaving a spider web, obviously vipers and spiders are both poisonous, but laying eggs and weaving a web are things that proceed from the creature itself.

In other words, it's the fruit of its labor. It's what it produces. A viper produces eggs and more vipers.

From its own body, a spider produces a web. In all likelihood, the web here is not seen as something to entrap people. That's what webs are primarily for.

But some webs, cobwebs, for example, have the appearance almost of gauze, of cloth. And it says these people will not be able to cover themselves with the webs they weave. It sounds like in both cases, the eggs they're hatching, the webs they're weaving are their works.

That's made clear at the end of verse 6. They will not cover themselves with their works. Their works are works of iniquity. The act of violence is in their hands.

What their life is producing is bad works. Just like a viper produces eggs that hatches more deadly snakes, a spider weaves a web, and you might think you could cover yourself in a web and conceal your nakedness, but you can't do this. Their works will not be able to cover them.

Their outward works won't conceal what they are inwardly, and their works are evil anyway. Now verses 7 and 8 are actually quoted by Paul. It says, Their feet run to evil.

They make haste to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity. Wasting and destruction are in their paths.

The way of peace they have not known. And there is no justice in their ways. They have made themselves crooked paths.

Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. In Romans chapter 3, Paul is trying to establish that Jews and Gentiles are about the same. He is writing to convince Jews that they are not superior than Gentiles simply because they have a history of having been

God's chosen people and having had the privilege of being given the law.

The Jews thought that because they were circumcised and they had the law, that that proved that they were God's favorites. And indeed, God had favored them in the Old Testament in giving them privileges the Gentiles did not have, the privilege of knowing Him and knowing His ways. Trouble is, they never used that knowledge to conform their lives to His ways, and they broke His laws.

So actually having these privileges did not make them better people. And Paul points out in Romans chapter 2 that not those who hear the law are justified, but those who do the law are justified before God. In other words, you'd be better people if you're doing what God told you to do.

Just having the law doesn't make you better people. But the Jews thought that they were better than the Gentiles because they had God's laws. The Gentiles were a lesser breed without the law, and therefore the Jews felt superior and often thought that they already had an in with God that the Gentiles did not have.

This is the concern Paul has in at least the first three chapters, or four, of Romans. He's addressing that Jewish prejudice, that Jewish false confidence. And in pointing this out in chapter 3 of Romans, this is kind of interesting how he develops his thought, and many people miss it and think he's making a different thought.

Calvinists use this passage because they think that Paul is trying to establish the doctrine of total depravity. He's not. He's trying to establish a doctrine that the Jews and Gentiles are the same in terms of depravity, and in terms of needing grace.

Because he says in chapter 3, verse 1, What advantage, then, has the Jew? Or what profit is there in circumcision? He answers, Much in every way, chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. The scriptures were given to them. That's an advantage.

What advantage did they have? They had great advantage. The chief advantage was God revealed Himself to them and gave Him His laws and His scriptures. That's a great advantage.

But verse 9 says, What then? Are we, meaning we Jews, better than they, Gentiles? Paul's a Jew, and he says, Are we better than they? That is, what advantage do Jews have? Well, a great advantage. Well, then, are we better than Gentiles? Well, not at all. You see, we've had advantages, but it hasn't made us better people.

We're not better than they are, for we have previously charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin, as it is written. Now, this as it is written is followed by, like, nine verses, which are quotations from five different passages in the Old Testament, one of which is Isaiah 59, verses 7 and 8. The others are all from the Psalms. But what they are

is a litany of denunciations, of the sinfulness of certain people.

And when Paul is finished putting together this collage of texts, he says in verse 19, Now we know that whatever the law says, meaning those verses he's just quoted, he's referring to the Old Testament as the law, whatever these verses say, whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that is, to the Jews. What he's saying is, as you read this description of wickedness in these passages, you might be saying, yes, those certainly, that certainly describes those Gentiles. But he's saying, no, this is not written to the Gentiles, this is written to the Jews.

Whatever the law is written to say, it's written to the Jews, to those who are under the law. And what Paul is saying is, these scriptures, which describe about as wicked as people can be, are not describing Gentiles. These are descriptions of Jewish people.

Now, Paul is certainly not saying that all Jews are this way, but he's saying that being Jewish doesn't prevent people from being this way. People can be just this bad, even though they're Jewish, and he proves it, because David and Isaiah described their own countrymen this way. Isaiah is not describing Gentiles in Isaiah 59, verses 7 and 8. He's describing the people of Jerusalem.

And so, by quoting verses like this, Paul is pointing out, if you as a Jew think that you're better than Gentiles just because you're Jewish, you'd better take a look at your own scriptures. Because your own scriptures describe these wicked people, and they are not Gentiles, they are Jews. So, although not all Jews are wicked, not all Jews are not wicked.

Many Jews are just as wicked as Gentiles, and the point he makes is Jews and Gentiles are really just about the same. That's his point. And so, he describes this condition.

Now, some people, especially Calvinists, want this to be a description of all people. Calvinists will quote those verses in Romans 3, and say, look at this, Paul is saying there's none that does good, no, not one, that's a quotation from Psalm 14, there's none that seeks after God, their feet are swift to shed blood, everything is wicked about them. They say, see, this is the total depravity of man, Paul's establishing that everybody is totally depraved.

Well, that's not exactly what he's doing. He's not talking about every individual. He's saying that Jews and Gentiles can both be in this category.

He's giving examples of where Jews are said to be in that category, but not all Jews. Isaiah wasn't like that, David wasn't like that. They're describing and complaining about the fact that so many of their countrymen were like that.

The Scriptures, Paul quotes, do not establish that all people are murderers. Not all people are. Or that there's no one at all who seeks God, because some people do.

David did, and he was the one who said there's none that seeks after God. David sought after God, and in the same Psalm that he said, there's none that seek after God, at Psalm 14, a few verses later he says, but God is with the congregation of the righteous. In other words, he's making a generality about Israel in his time.

Seems like nobody's seeking God, but there are some. There are some who are the generation of the righteous, God's with them. So, in other words, neither David nor Isaiah are trying to make a universal statement about all unregenerate people so that the Calvinists will have a nice doctrine of total depravity.

What they're trying to do is saying, sin knows no racial boundaries. Sin exists among Gentiles. Sin exists among Jews.

And Jews, although they have the law, unless they keep it, can be every bit as bad as the Gentiles, and should not think themselves superior on racial grounds. They may be superior if they actually are living more righteously than someone else. They might really feel, okay, well, God's more pleased with me because I'm being more righteous than someone else is.

That would be a legitimate consideration. But not, God's more pleased with me because I'm a Jew. God doesn't like corrupt Jews any more than He likes corrupt Gentiles.

He doesn't like corrupt people. And Jews are people, too. Now, Isaiah 59.9 Therefore, justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us.

We look for light, but there's darkness, for brightness, but we walk in blackness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes. We stumble at noonday at twilight.

We are as dead men in desolate places. We all growl like bears and moan sadly like doves. We're kind of bipolar.

Sometimes we're whiny and depressed. Other times we're aggressive and nasty. But we pray boldly and shake our fist at God to make demands, and other times we kind of humble ourselves and moan and weep and cry out to God.

But our lives aren't any different, and so God doesn't do anything. We look for justice, but there's none. For salvation, but it's far from us.

For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us. For our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them. Isaiah is sort of making a confession of sin for his people.

He's obviously praying here and saying, we know we're sinners, we are transgressors. He's sort of making a confession, hopefully maybe putting words in the mouth of the

remnant, expressing the heart of those who are turning to God. In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood, justice is turned back, and righteousness stands afar off.

For truth is fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter. So truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. This truth and righteousness and equity are personified as if they're characters trying to come to the city.

When they get to the city, they get shot down. They fall on the streets. They don't conquer.

Justice doesn't prevail. And whoever departs from evil, it says, makes himself a prey. That is, if you turn from evil, you're going to be persecuted by people.

You have to be evil to be on good terms with the population. If you depart from evil, you're setting yourself up as a target for persecution. Then the Lord saw it.

This was not a good situation. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and he wondered that there was no intercessor.

Therefore his own arm brought salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with a zeal as a cloak.

According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay. Fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies, the coastlands he will fully repay. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun.

Which, of course, means the east. When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord.

Now, of course, Paul quotes verse 20 over in Romans 11, 26. He quotes it as basically an explanation or a backup for his explanation that God is indeed returned through Christ to the true Zion. And it's at the end of his statement where hardness in part or blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in.

And thus all Israel will be saved as it is written. And he quotes this verse. All Israel will be saved is what he's saying.

And this verse is predicting that. The Redeemer will come to Zion. That's apparently, and those who turn from transgression in Jacob, that's Israel.

And this is seen as Paul sees this as a statement of salvation in Christ to Zion, to Israel. But he's made it very clear. When we say Israel, we're talking about the fullness of the

Gentiles included with the remnant of Israel.

He said hardness has happened to part of Israel, but not the other part. There's a remnant that are not hardened. There are branches that are still attached to the olive tree, have not been broken off because of their unbelief, Paul says.

There's a remnant of Israel who are believers in Christ. And then Gentiles come in and believe in Christ. And in this way, God is saving all of the true Israel.

The true Israel is the Jews who believe and the Gentiles who believe. And Paul quotes this verse as having to do with that. Now, the verses leading up to it in Isaiah talk about how God saw the condition of the nation of Israel and that there was no justice and no righteousness there.

And it bothered him and he realized that no one was going to fix this if he didn't. No one could fix this but him. And so he armed himself to go to battle against his adversaries.

Interestingly, he put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head. Paul mentions those two items when he talks about us putting on the whole armor of God. In Ephesians 6, Paul actually mentions five articles of armor.

But the helmet and the breastplate are the very ones that are mentioned here. So Paul is clearly informed somewhat by this passage. He goes beyond it by adding other pieces of armor.

But in Ephesians 6, verse 13 says, Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on your breastplate of righteousness, having your feet shod with the preparation of the good news of peace, a reference to Isaiah 52.7, above all taking the shield of faith with which you'll be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. This is the equipment for the spiritual battle. He mentions a helmet and a breastplate and three other items of armor plus a sword.

But it's clear the helmet and the breastplate are the ones that God himself wears. And in Isaiah, it's God who put on righteousness as a breastplate, or more likely Christ. You see, putting on the armor is putting on Christ because He is the one who's wearing the armor, according to Isaiah.

He wears the armor and we wear it when we wear Him. If you look at Romans chapter 13, Romans 13, 12, Paul said, The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light.

In verse 14, he says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh.

Where to put on the armor of light, how do you do that? You put on Christ. He's wearing it.

If you are in Christ, you have the armor on because He has it on. And therefore you enter into His battle. You enter into His conflict with evil.

If you're in Christ, you have the helmet of salvation because He has it on. You have the breastplate of righteousness because He has it. You have the belt of truth because He's wearing it.

You have the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel peace because those are His shoes. And so, we can see this is the background for Paul's statements. Paul talks about putting on the armor of God, but he didn't make this up.

This is actually just a carryover from Isaiah where it is Christ, no doubt, who is seen wearing the armor. And Paul says, you need to put on Christ. And in doing so, you put on the armor of light and you are safe in the battle against wickedness.

So, we have in this passage in Isaiah, Christ coming to wage war against His adversaries. No doubt, this was the spiritual adversaries of Satan and so forth. Because Paul, when he tells us to put on the armor, is saying we're wrestling against principalities and powers.

And the rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual wickedness and heavenly places. Apparently, demonic powers and therefore, this armor is preparation for fighting against demonic powers. And when it says that God, He will repay His adversaries, He's apparently talking about the punishment that Jesus inflicted on Satan at the cross.

He triumphed over him, the Bible says. He made a show of Him openly triumphing over Him in the cross, it says in Colossians 2.15. And so, this is Christ's victory over sin and Satan on behalf of His people. He was getting sick of it.

He was getting sick of seeing His people slaves of sin. And so, He stepped out, put on the armor and did what had to be done. He was the Redeemer coming to Zion.

Verse 19, it says, When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. This, no doubt, is a reference to the continuing campaign because it does say, in verse 19, They show fear, the name of the Lord, from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun. This is talking about the gospel being embraced east and west in the Gentile lands.

So, Jesus came and conquered at the cross, but the battle continues as the message is carried to the Gentile world. And is being embraced so that people in all lands are worshipping God, coming to Christ. This is the church age and the statement, when the enemy comes in like a flood.

Flood is probably to be understood as whenever the enemy comes in like a flood. In the course of this conquest of the nations by the gospel, the enemy puts up a strong resistance when he can. But the Lord lifts up a standard and rallies the troops against him.

And apparently, it suggests that overwhelm him. That the devil will be overwhelmed when he comes against the armies of God. And this does seem to be true.

The devil has certainly waged violent attacks against the church throughout history. Persecution is often bloody and gory against the church, but the church still progresses. Still reaches out to all nations and has conquered more territory in the times of greatest persecution.

So, the enemy does come like a flood to resist and to fight and kills. He's bloody. He's ruthless.

But the Lord still raises more power against him so that the gospel invades that territory and takes it anyway. The most obvious case in modern times would be China, of course. Where Mao Zedong waged the fiercest persecution against Christians probably known in all history for 40 years or more.

And then he died. And then it turned out, people found out when news came out of China after Mao was dead, the church had grown from less than a million when Mao came to power. 700,000 maybe in the church in China when Mao came to power.

When he left, at least 50 million Christians. Some say 100 million. And the church grew faster in China during those years than it grew at any comparable period ever in history.

And it was under the greatest persecution known. So, the enemy comes in like a flood to stomp out the church. And there's casualties, but the church still wins.

God rallies the troops and sends angels, no doubt, and power and makes conquests anyway. Christ is armed invincibly. And so, the church that is in him, marching with him, is invincibly armed.

Verse 21, As for me, says the Lord, this is my covenant with them. My spirit who 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 descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants, says the Lord, from this time and forever. The church, in other words, will always be in possession of the word of God, will always be his mouthpiece forever.

There will not come a time when the church will be set aside as Israel was and replaced with somebody else. Your descendants and your descendants' descendants will always have my word in their mouths, will always be my spokesman, in other words. Now, of course, the church doesn't mean the institutional church.

And certainly any church, institutional, could be set aside, and many have come and gone. Many institutional churches have risen, had a career, and disappeared from the scene. But the church is, of course, the true body of Christ, the true kingdom of God, and it continues to exist with the rise and fall of institutional churches, despite that rise and fall.

Now, Chapter 60, there's been a lot of darkness in Chapters 58 and 59, but now the light shines. And this passage describes the new heavenly Jerusalem. Actually, Zion, which is mentioned in Chapter 59, Verse 20, had disappeared from view in Isaiah way back in Chapter 52.

The last time we heard of Zion before Chapter 59, 20 was back in Chapter 52, Verse 8. And then there was a lot of stuff looking elsewhere, not at Zion. But now we have the Redeemer coming to Zion, and this Zion is a new Zion. When Jesus came, he established a new Jerusalem, a new Zion, a new people of God.

It has continuity with the old Zion because, of course, the remnant of Israel, the remnant of Jerusalem and Judea, were the starting point of the new Zion. Jesus first evangelized Jewish people, and the apostles first evangelized Jewish people after Pentecost, so that it was the remnant of the Jews that established the new Zion under the Messiah. But Gentiles were later added, and now 2,000 years later, we think of it almost exclusively as a Gentile community, but it's not.

There are still, no doubt, hundreds of thousands, if not more, Jews, maybe millions of Jews who are true believers in Christ and are in the body of Christ, but far more Gentiles. But the point is, there is a continuity from the old Zion to the new because the new grew out of the old, from the remnant there. The good seed sprouted into a new Zion, a new generation of Zion, and though it has continuity with the old, it has discontinuity too because the old had to go.

Jerusalem had to be destroyed because it was attached to an old system that was now replaced. There was a new covenant for Zion, and that's what we see in verse 21. This is my covenant with them, my Spirit who is upon them.

The covenant was that He put His Spirit upon them in the new Zion. The Redeemer came to Zion and made a new covenant, which is the covenant of the Spirit dwelling in them, and that's the church. And it's that Zion that is described in chapter 60, where it says, Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

This is like the imagery of a dawning day. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will rise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

Lift up your eyes all around and see they, that is the Gentiles, all gathered together. They come to you, your sons shall come from afar, your daughters shall be nursed at your side. Then you will see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy because the abundance of the sea, meaning the Gentiles, shall be turned to you.

The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you. The multitude of camels shall cover your land. The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all of those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and incense, they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you. The rams of Nebiot shall minister to you.

They shall ascend with acceptance on my altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. The house of his glory is the body of Christ, the church, God's house. And these Gentile nations, of course, a lot of them are ancient nations that don't exist anymore, but as we've pointed out previously, Isaiah and the prophets often will list, you know, some nations that are current in their time as representative of the larger category of just Gentiles.

It's a prediction that Gentiles will come into the body of Christ and bring with them their sacrifices to God. They'll worship God, you know, they'll bring their sheep, they'll bring their gold, they'll bring their offerings to the Lord. Now this is likened to a sunrise, and many people have applied chapter 60 to the future, when Jesus comes back.

There's some reasons that encourage them to do that, because later we'll see in verse 11, and also in verse 19, imagery describing the New Jerusalem that is taken directly, well, not taken from, but is carried over into Revelation 21 in the description of the New Jerusalem, which most of us understand to be a future thing. Some people don't see it that way. Some see Revelation 21 as talking about the New Covenant community and the church, which is reasonable.

But I believe, all things considered, many of which I don't have time to bring up here, but I will when we're talking about it in Revelation, I believe that the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 is future. But the writer of Hebrews said that we who are Christians, they have tasted of the powers of the age to come, so that it is probable that the New Jerusalem will be a literal phenomenon, or maybe not exactly literal, but nonetheless descriptive of something much more like what we read of there, when Jesus comes back. But we have tasted the powers of that age through the Spirit, so that its realities are to a very large degree real in the church age.

And I've said before that I don't really know of any Old Testament passage that the Apostles quote and apply to the future. This could be an exception. It's not certain.

And that is that passages from this chapter in Isaiah are carried over into the New

Jerusalem description in Revelation 21. And if Revelation 21 is talking about a future New Heavens and New Earth, which would be, of course, the majority opinion, but not necessarily the only one possible. But if it is the future, then we do have an exception to what I said, so that a New Testament book actually carries this passage over into a future phenomenon when Jesus comes back.

Yet, it is a kingdom passage like the others. And the other passages are often quoted in the New Testament, in fact always, as being now. So the question would be, is the kingdom described here future or is it now? And perhaps the way we're supposed to understand it would be it is manifest universally at when Jesus comes back in the future.

But it is true to the believer now. And it does seem like this is described in the present time because it says in verse 2, Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people. That's one group of people on the planet.

But us, the Lord will rise on us and his glory will be seen upon us. This is apparently there's a contrast between two communities. The New Jerusalem, us, we're in the light.

The glory of God has risen upon us. But the world out there, they're in darkness. So there is still the tension between two worlds as it were, two communities.

The world out there that's still in darkness and the church that is in the light. But the light that comes on the church attracts Gentiles. Remember Jesus said, let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

And so the light here arising upon us causes Gentiles to see and to come to the light. Verse 3, and kings will come to the brightness of your rising. And it talks about this great in-gathering of Gentiles here in verse 4. And it gives examples of dromedaries from Midian and things like that which is old language.

Languages of old things that are to be no doubt understood as representative of the generic category of Gentiles bringing their things to God. Bringing themselves and their things to offer to God. Coming into the church in other words.

It says in verse 8, who are they who fly like a cloud and like doves to their roosts? Surely the coastlands shall wait for me. And the ships of Tarshish will come first to bring your sons from afar. Their silver and their gold with them.

To the name of the Lord your God. And to the Holy One of Israel. Because he has glorified you.

Because God has glorified the remnant in Christ. And his glory is seen upon them. There has been a drawing in of Gentiles from all over the world.

The sons of foreigners shall build your walls. Now remember the repairs of the breach. The godly will be building up the spiritual walls of the spiritual city.

And that will include Gentiles. Foreigners involved in that project. Their king shall minister to you.

For in my wrath I struck you. But in my favor I have had mercy on you. No doubt that statement is referring to the fact that God had earlier disciplined Israel by sending them into Babylon.

But now he is having mercy by sending the Messiah and establishing the righteous city. The new Jerusalem. Therefore your gates shall be opened continually.

They shall not be shut day or night. That men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles and their kings in procession. So the gates being open continually day and night is referred to in Revelation 21.

Verses 25 and 26 of the new Jerusalem. For a city to keep its gates open at night was unheard of. The gates would be open for commerce during the day.

But they would have to close the gates at night to avoid invasions when people are sleeping. But the gates, this is a secure city. And it's admitting people all the time.

For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish. And those nations shall be utterly ruined. This may be intended to be true ultimately.

That the nations that don't follow Christ will be wiped out at his second coming. But it's also perhaps seen in some cases in this time period. When nations attack the church, eventually the nations themselves come under judgment.

Not always and not always quickly. But certainly there have been the communist governments that rose up to attack Christianity. Many of them have fallen.

And the ones that remain are almost fallen. Hitler certainly opposed God and God's people and he's fallen. So I mean there are, the Roman Empire opposed the church.

And paganism fell in Rome and so forth. At one time the popes were the great persecutors of the true believers. All who dissented from them were tortured and killed if they could get their hands on them.

But then in the reformation the popes lost their control over Europe and so forth. So the nations that don't serve Christ eventually go away or lose their position. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you.

Which probably means the cedars there. The cypress, the pine and the box tree together to beautify the place of my sanctuary. Just like those things were brought by Solomon to

build the sanctuary.

This is speaking of the spiritual sanctuary being built obviously from spiritual materials. People, people are likened to trees. Also stones.

The building is made of stones and wood. And we are the building so the trees are people. And so are the stones, living stones.

He says, I will make the place of my feet glorious. Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing down to you. And all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet.

And they shall call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. And that language is very, very close. Almost identical to the language of Hebrews 12.22 which we have seen on previous occasions.

Hebrews 12.22 it says, but you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. The heavenly Jerusalem. Which he calls the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn in the next verse.

But he calls it the city of the living God. Here it says, you'll be called the city of the Lord. The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

We've come to Mount Zion. This is the church it's describing. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated so that no one went through you.

I will make you an eternal excellence. A joy of many generations. You shall drink dry the milk of the Gentiles.

You shall milk the breast of kings. Strange imagery. You shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Instead of bronze I'll bring gold. Instead of iron I'll bring silver. This is probably referring to the fact that some of the kings when they were under siege would strip the gold from the temple or gold shields from some of the towers and replace them with bronze.

So that the glory of Jerusalem diminished as they were under siege and as they were negotiating their own deliverance. They became less gold and more bronze. Now it says I'm going to give you gold instead of bronze.

I'm going to restore your glory. And very possibly these are references to people. People are like gold tried in the fire in the New Testament.

I'm going to replace the worthless people with the people who are true gold in the city of God. The stones of the city. Instead of stones, iron.

I will also make your officers peace and your magistrates righteousness. Violence shall no longer be heard in your land. Neither wasting nor destruction within your borders.

But you shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise. Which means obviously we're seeing clearly this is a spiritual city not a physical city. It's praise that is the gates.

It is salvation that is the walls. And we saw this back in chapter 26 in verse 1. You may recall Isaiah 26 1 it says In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city.

God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. So it's the same idea here. The church is a strong spiritual city.

Has spiritual walls, spiritual gates. You enter through praise. You enter into his courts with praise.

According to Psalm 100. And you're protected by his salvation. Like a helmet or like walls.

The sun shall no longer be your light by day. Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you. But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light.

And your God your glory. You can check that against Revelation 21 23. Says the city has no need of the sun, moon or stars.

Shine it for the glory of the Lord and of the Lamb is the light of it. What's this saying? It's like the Holy of Holies. It's the place where God dwells in immediate fellowship with his people.

The Holy of Holies was where you went in behind the high priest went behind the curtain. And there was no natural light. No sun, moon, stars, not even any lamps.

Just the glory of the Lord. It was the only light in the Holy of Holies. It was direct access to God.

That we now have that. Is emblemized by the fact that the veil was torn from top to bottom when Jesus died. That veil that debarred access to the Holy of Holies for everyone except the high priest.

That veil is removed as far as God is concerned. So that now we dwell in the Holy of Holies. In fact the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, is it like a big Holy of Holies itself.

Your sun shall no longer go down. Nor shall your moon withdraw itself. For the Lord will be your everlasting light.

And the days of your mourning shall be ended. Of course sun and moon are features of

many different prophecies we've seen earlier. Generally speaking the sun being bright and the moon shining is blessing.

The sun going dark, the moon turning to blood or darkness. Stars falling is judgment. This is all good here.

Your sun is never going to go down or your moon withdraw its light. Verse 21. Also your people shall be all righteous.

And they shall inherit the land forever. The branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified. This is clearly a reference to the church because the same terms are used in the next chapter.

In verse 3, chapter 61, 3. Where we're called the planting of the Lord that he may be glorified. The same thought as we have in chapter 60, verse 21. And yet chapter 61 is very clearly established by the first coming of Christ because he said so.

Verse 22. A little one shall become like a thousand. A small one a strong nation.

I the Lord will hasten it in its time. People who are weak will become like strong. That's basically what he's saying.

In the Lord. And this is something God will bring about in his time. It wasn't going to happen immediately in Isaiah's time.

But when it's time would come, God would quickly do it. And chapter 61, which we'll see next time, is the announcement that he's doing it. He's the spirit upon Christ because he's been anointed to preach the good tidings about the time had come.

It's the acceptable day of the Lord or the acceptable year of the Lord. It says. So God will hasten it at the right time.

And chapter 61 takes us forward in time to the time of the first coming of Christ, which where the announcement is, it's time. All right. But right now, it's time for us to quit this class and come back to the next one in chapter 61.

Next time.