

**Commentary on Isaiah 58 and 59 by Chuck Smith 11.29.23**

**Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471**

**Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399**

**Web site [todbc.org](http://todbc.org) email us at [opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org](mailto:opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org)**

**November memory verse [Isaiah 7:14 \(NKJV\)](#) Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**

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**Chapter 58**

Cry aloud, spare not ([Isa 58:1](#)),

The Lord is commanding now the prophet Isaiah.

lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily ([Isa 58:1-2](#)),

Now there was a real inconsistency here, because the attendance at the temple worship had not diminished at all. People were still going through outward forms of religion. There was a popular religious movement on the surface, but the heart of the people was still alienated from God. And so there was a combination. They would go to temple and worship God. And yet they were still worshipping their own little idols and still following after their own flesh. And such was the dichotomy that existed then and such is the dichotomy today. There are people who still on the surface acknowledge God. And it's a surface experience, but it hasn't really affected down in their hearts and down in their lives, their way of living. And God was interested in the heart.

Now you remember when Jeremiah who prophesied shortly after Isaiah, and during the time of Jeremiah's prophecy, when Josiah became the king. He was a good king and there was a popular religious movement under Josiah. You might say a revival. Everybody was going back to temple. And so the Lord said to Jeremiah, this young boy, "Now you go down to the temple and cry unto the people as they're going into the temple, saying, 'Trust not in lying vanities saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.'"" In other words, God again was crying out against the fact that it was only a surface movement. It wasn't down deep in the hearts of the people a move towards Him. So here God is telling the prophet, "Cry out. Let your voice be like a trumpet. Show My people their transgressions for they seek Me daily."

they delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; and they take delight in approaching God ([Isa 58:2](#)).

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They had a great form of religion. Going to hear, inquiring, "What does God say?" And then they were complaining. They were even fasting, but they were saying to God,

How is it that we have fasted, and you do not see it? we have afflicted our soul, and you haven't taken any acknowledgment of it? ([Isa 58:3](#))

But the Lord answers them.

Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and you exact all your labors. Behold, you fast for strife and for debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high ([Isa 58:3-4](#)).

You're not really fasting to seek God but to prove a point.

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? will you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? ([Isa 58:5](#))

Do you think that I want an outward kind of a thing from you?

Now Jesus said when you fast, don't be like the hypocrites who like to make a big, open kind of a display of their fasting. They get a very mournful face and they don't anoint themselves and all. And they look very gaunt and sad. You say, "Oh, what's the matter, brother?" "Oh, I'm fasting today, brother, you know." "And oh my, isn't he spiritual?" And the Lord says, "Hey, don't do it that way. That's not it. I don't want an outward fasting kind of a thing. If you're going to fast, let it be something really of your heart and seeking after Me. Don't let it be to prove a point. Don't let it be to gain an advantage." How many times people are trying to fast just to gain some kind of an advantage with God. Force God to answer my prayer because I'm fasting. If I'm going to afflict my soul and going to fast, let me do it out of a pure motive of just wanting God and more of God in my life. And do it unto God, not in a big display or show. But God said,

This is the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when you see the naked, that you would cover him; and that thou hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning ([Isa 58:6-8](#)),

When you really are fasting right, doing what God wants, fasting and doing, God wants you to set free those that are oppressed. To feed those that are hungry. To clothe those that are poor. Take of your substance and really give it to someone else. "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning."

and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall [come behind you] be your rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take

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away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity ([Isa 58:8-9](#));

So there is a fast that God will honor. And God will be with you. He'll go before you and behind you. He'll answer you when you call. They were fasting, but it was just a formality. And then they were saying, "Well, why doesn't God respond?" And so God answers why He was not responding.

And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness shall be as the noonday: And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not ([Isa 58:10-11](#)).

So the prosperity, the blessing, the glory if you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the old foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and thou shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and to feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it ([Isa 58:12-14](#)).

So the right way to fast; the wrong way to fast. The right purposes and the wrong purposes. And also it does also follow in the keeping of the sabbath day, the right and the wrong way.

### Chapter 59

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear ([Isa 59:1](#)):

"Lord, why aren't You hearing us when we fast? Why aren't You acknowledging it? Why aren't You recognizing it?" Now the Lord's saying, "Hey, look, there's nothing. I don't have any hearing problem. The Lord's hand is not short that He cannot save; neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear." If you're not getting answers to prayer, it isn't really God's fault. The fault lies within us. And the Lord declares, "My hand is not short, that I cannot save."

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear ([Isa 59:2](#)).

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David said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me when I pray" ([Psalm 66:18](#)). God says, "Look, My hand is not short, My ear isn't heavy that I cannot save, I cannot hear." But your sins have broken the connection between you and God. Sin can hinder your prayers. For sin breaks your relationship with God. And at that point, prayer is totally meaningless. In fact, it's perhaps a little worse. Prayer is deceitful, because though you know that you are wrong and you are doing wrong, so many times a person passes it off by saying, "Well, I know that I am not living as I should but I still pray. I know that this is wrong. I know that this is sin and all but I still pray." But wait a minute. Your prayers are totally meaningless. You're being deceived by them because God says that He will not hear. Your sin has separated between you and God. So the fact that you still pray is totally meaningless, because you've allowed this sin in your life. And thus you are deceived by your prayer life itself thinking, "Well, I'm not too bad, I still pray."

God declares,

For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perverseness ([Isa 59:3](#)).

So one of the manners of praying was often to lift up their hands to the Lord. But God says, "You're lifting up your hands to Me but they're full of blood, full of iniquity." In that sense, prayer is an insult to God. If I hold up hands before God that are full of blood, full of iniquity, that's insulting God. Surely God will not honor nor hear.

Now God said,

None is calling for justice, no one is pleading for truth: they are trusting in vanity, they are speaking lies; they conceive mischief, and they bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and they weave the spider's web: and he that eats the eggs will die, and those eggs which are crushed will break out into a viper. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and 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 know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold there is obscurity; we wait for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice stands afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that

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departs from evil makes himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment ([Isa 59:4-15](#)).

The tragic condition of man and it is expressed, of course, in an extremely poetic way. And this portion of Isaiah is actually Hebrew poetry. And we see the thoughts are expressed in very picturesque ways: crooked paths, groping like a blind man, like a person with no eyes, stumbling at noontime as though it were midnight, desolate as the grave, men who dwell in the grave or in places as dead men. And God looking on the whole thing, seeing the whole perversity of man, seeing the greed of man. Ruling his heart as no one is really seeking to be fair or honest or just. No one calling for justice. Everybody getting by with whatever they can.

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor ([Isa 59:16](#)):

No one to cry out against it. People just allowing it to go on.

therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head ([Isa 59:16-17](#));

It reminds you of Ephesians chapter 6 where we are told to put on the whole armor of God, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation.

and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; and to the coasts he will pay to recompense ([Isa 59:17-18](#)).

In Hebrews it says that "it is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God" ([Hebrews 10:31](#)). For we know Him who has declared, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" ([Romans 12:19](#)). And God here speaks of this day of judgment.

So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood ([Isa 59:19](#)),

And He has spoken of that which has taken place here. The enemy is just come in like a flood. There doesn't seem to be any intercessor, anyone who is really seeking for righteousness, anyone who is really seeking for the right thing. No intercessor, and God wonders at it. And the enemy is just come in like a flood. If a person seeks to live righteous, he is sort of isolated. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, then the Spirit," because there is no intercessor, there is no man to do it.

the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him ([Isa 59:19](#)).

God intervenes and begins to work.

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And the Redeemer [Jesus Christ] shall come to Zion [to Jerusalem], and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever ([Isa 59:20-21](#)).

For God in spite of all things is yet going to show forth His mercy and His grace upon these people. Paul the apostle said, "that blindness is happened to Israel in part until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. But then all of Israel shall be saved, as saith the scripture, for the Lord shall come to Zion" ([Romans 11:25-26](#)). And so Paul is making a reference really to this particular prophecy of Isaiah of that glorious day when Jesus comes and establishes His kingdom. And from the covenant of God with the people that shall be a perpetual covenant forever. And so the deliverance of Zion, the glorious day of the Lord. Paul said the cutting off brought salvation to the Gentiles. What do you think the grafting of them back in is going to be? If the cutting off of Israel brought such glory to the world, how much more when God restores them and restores His work with these people will the glory of the Lord fill the earth.