

Book of Isaiah



Chapter 59

Theme: Condemnation of Israel; confession of Israel; coming of the Redeemer to Israel

**Michael Fronczak
564 Schaeffer Dr.
Coldwater, Michigan 49036**

**Bible Study Resource Center
Copyright © 2018**

Chapter 59

THEME: Condemnation of Israel; confession of Israel; coming of the Redeemer to Israel

This remarkable chapter continues God's charges against Israel, and He spells them out. Their sins had brought about their sad state. Religion had become a cover-up for their sins. God refuses to hear because of their iniquities, not because He was hard of hearing. Many people today think God has a hearing problem. God hears us all right. The problem lies with us.

Their sins are referred to thirty-two times. Many words are used to describe their sins: iniquities, sins, defiled with blood, lies, perverseness, vanity, mischief, adder's eggs, spider's web, viper, works, violence, evil, wasting, destruction, crooked paths, darkness, transgressions, departing, oppression, revolt, conceiving, and uttering of falsehood. There are twenty-three separate charges brought against them. What a picture this is! For Israel there will be a time of national confession of sin. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem. We are told about it in Zechariah 12:11-14: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."¹

Because of the depravity of the nation, national salvation and prosperity would have to come from God's initiative. In chapter 59 the Lord again spoke of the people's sins and His provision of salvation because of the Abrahamic Covenant.²

Rebuke, confession, and reconciliation. This ch presents a three-part dialogue. The prophet reprimands the nation; the nation, or at least the faithful among them, acknowledge their misdeeds; and then the prophet announces that God will bring justice and mercy to the people. God speaks directly to the faithful in the last v. This ch, like the previous one, attributes the delay of the redemption predicted in chs 40-48 to the people's sins.³

¹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

² The Bible Knowledge Commentary

³ Jewish Study Bible Notes

¹Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:

[the LORD'S hand is not shortened] The only time this statement is found in Scripture. Since the arm is an emblem of power, shortness of the hand would signify diminished power, and length of the hand or arm great power. In history, Artaxerxes Longimanus was called long-handed because of this great power -- not because of a peculiarity in his body. In Egyptian sculpture all the rays of the sun have hands at the end, indicating the great power of the sun (cp. Isa. 50:2; Num. 11:23).

[shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear] Two things God cannot do because of sin:

1. Save when sin separates from Him
2. Hear when sin separates from Him. He cannot or will not hear (Ps. 66:18) when sin comes between Him and man; and if He cannot hear, He cannot answer. This is the chief hindrance in the case of the righteous (Mt. 17:20; 21:22; Mk. 11:22-24)⁴

The reason that Israel was not saved in Isaiah's day was not due to any weakness in the "mighty bared arm of Jehovah" which we saw in Isaiah 53. The Lord's hand was not shortened. Neither was it due to any faulty connection in His communication with man. Likewise in our day it is not the mental hurdles that man has to surmount nor any of his many problems, but his sin separates him from God.⁵

Sin offends our holy God and separates us from him. Because God is holy, he cannot ignore, excuse, or tolerate sin as though it didn't matter. Sin cuts people off from him, forming a wall to isolate God from the people he loves. No wonder this long list of wretched sins makes God angry and forces him to look the other way. People who die with their life of sin unforgiven separate themselves eternally from God. God wants them to live with him forever, but he cannot take them into his holy presence unless their sin is removed. Have you confessed your sin to God, allowing him to remove it? The Lord can save you if you turn to him.⁶

The prophet reminded the nation that the Lord could save them in spite of their difficult circumstances. He is powerful enough—His arm (cf. v. 16; see comments on 40:10) is not... short. And He is caring enough—He is not dull of hearing. This implies that Israel simply needed to call out to God and He would come to her rescue.⁷

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save: God's people wondered why God did not seem to rescue them from their trials. They wondered if perhaps God had diminished in strength - if His hand had become shortened. Isaiah the prophet assures them that this is not the case.

This touches on one of the greatest problems in practical theology: how can there be a God of love and all power when there is human suffering? If we loved someone and had the power to

⁴ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶ Life Application Study Bible.

⁷ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

end their suffering, wouldn't we do it? Isaiah addresses those who wondered if God wasn't all powerful, and that is why their suffering continues.

Nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: Perhaps the problem isn't that God lacks power. Perhaps He lacks knowledge of our problem, or interest in our problem. But this isn't the situation at all, as Isaiah reminds us. God's ear is not heavy. He can hear us just fine.⁸

Here, as in 40.27; 49.14; 50.1-2, Isaiah responds to specific complaints uttered by contemporaries. The Babylonians have been defeated, as Isaiah and earlier prophets predicted, but the new age has failed to materialize: The exiles have not all returned to Zion, and the land remains mostly desolate. Consequently, some Judeans speculated that the Lord was not able to save them, or that God did not listen to their prayers. The prophet retorts that Israel's sins, not God's abilities, are the root of the problem. Earlier, Isaiah seemed to think that sins were only a part of Israel's past, and that God would automatically treat the nation with grace after their punishment in Babylon (40.2; 43.25; 48.11), but now that an imperfect restoration has taken place, the prophet recognizes the continuing existence of sin and its unhappy consequences.⁹

²But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

The real issue is the accountability of sin.¹⁰

[iniquities have separated between you and your God] This is the only thing that separates from God and causes Him to turn His face away from men. Separation from Him is spiritual death in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-15). The idea is that where sin is present a wall has been built between God and man so that there are no means of communication between them. [hid his face from you, that he will not hear] See Isa. 45:15; 54:8; 57:17.¹¹

Let me quote the comment of Alexander Maclaren in *The Books of Isaiah and Jeremiah*: "It is not because God is great and I am small, it is not because He lives for ever, and my life is but a strength and my weakness, that I am parted from Him: 'Your sins have separated between you and your God.' And no man, build he Babels ever so high, can reach thither. There is one means by which the separation is at an end, and by which all objective hindrances to union, and all subjective hindrances, are alike swept away. Christ has come, and in Him the heavens have bended down to touch, and touching to bless this low earth, and man and God are at one once more."

Now throughout this first section God spells out their sins. It is rather a discouraging picture of the human family -- and of you and me. Then we have a confession of Israel, which is coming in the future when the Redeemer comes to Zion.¹²

⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

⁹ Jewish Study Bible Notes

¹⁰ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

¹¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

¹² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

2-8 However, though the Lord could save them, the nation's sins had separated them from the Lord (cf. Ps. 66:18; Prov. 28:9). Though He could hear them (Isa. 59:1) He chose not to (v. 2). Sin prevents prayer from being answered (cf. Ps. 66:18). Those sins included murder, lying, injustice (cf. Isa. 59:9, 11, 14-15), and planning evil (vv. 3-4). Their actions were like those of deadly poisonous snakes (vipers and an adder), for they were harming each other. Just as people can see through cobwebs, which therefore are inappropriate for clothing (v. 6), so God could see through the evil deeds of these people and judge them. In a hurry to do evil things, they were bringing ruin to others (v. 7) and were constantly traveling down evil paths. As a result they knew no peace (cf. 48:22; 57:20-21).¹³

But your iniquities have separated you from your God: The problem isn't with God's power, His knowledge, or His interest. The problem is with our iniquities. Sin has separated you from your God.

In what way does sin separate us from God? Sin does not necessarily separate us from the presence of God, because God is present everywhere (Psalm 139:7) and even Satan can have an audience with God (Job 1:6). Sin does not separate us from the love of God, because God loves sinners (Romans 5:8). But sin still does separate.

- Sin separates us from fellowship with God, because at least at the point of our sin, we no longer think alike with God.
- Sin separates us from the blessing of God, because at least at the point of our sin, we are not trusting God and relying on Him.
- Sin separates us from some of the benefits of God's love, even as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) was still loved by the father, but didn't enjoy the benefits of his love when he was in sin.
- Sin separates us, in some way, from the protection of God, because He will allow trials to come our way to correct us.

How easy it is for us to blame our problems on everything except our iniquities! We will even blame God before seeing that the problem is with us! We will deny who God is before seeing that the problem is with us!

And your sins have hidden His face from you: This explains why God's people no longer felt the face of the LORD shining on them (Numbers 6:25). It was their sins, not the inability of God to hear, or his lack of interest in hearing.

This helps us understand - at least in a small way - the cry of Jesus from the cross, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? (Matthew 27:46). As Jesus stood in the place of guilty sinners, there was some way in which the face of God the Father was hidden from Him. Not in an ultimate, absolute sense; but in some way. But that was for our sins, not His own!¹⁴

'Your' 'iniquities' '!' '!' '!' 'Your' 'sins:' The Heb word order emphasizes these nouns. Therefore, translate: "It is your 'iniquities' that have been a barrier. . . . It is your 'sins' that have made Him turn. . . ." ¹⁵

¹³ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

¹⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

¹⁵ Jewish Study Bible Notes

Iniquities and sins create a practical barrier between God and his people, typically resulting in God's discipline (see Heb. 12:5–11; cf. James 4:1–10). In this case, the extreme nature of their behavior may express total unbelief.

Iniquities and sins create a practical barrier between God and his people, typically resulting in God's discipline (see Heb. 12:5–11; cf. James 4:1–10). In this case, the extreme nature of their behavior may express total unbelief.¹⁶

³For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

Your hands are defiled with blood: They practiced and approved of violence and murder. Your lips have spoken lies: They lied with ease and regularity.¹⁷

3–8 These sins, which keep God's presence away, are not religious but social. your hands are defiled with blood. See 1:15. they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity. Sin comes naturally. Their feet run to evil, meaning they are eager for sin. Paul describes the entire sinful human race with Isaiah's language (Rom. 3:15–17), implying that when God's people do not embrace his covenant, they can sin as badly as any others.¹⁸

⁴None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

“Vanity” = “chaos” = randomness - entropy. Isa 30:12; Jer 2:4, 8. Religion of today is randomness, evolution.¹⁹

No one calls for justice: They did not share God's heart for what was fair and good; everyone simply thought in terms of their own good. Both justice and truth were distant concepts, and instead of justice there were empty words, instead of truth there were lies.

Motyer on empty words: "Isaiah is not describing but diagnosing. They may think they are acting sensibly but actually it is all nonsense."

They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity, as if they were snakes giving birth to more evil serpents, bringing forth nothing but death (he who eats of their eggs dies) and more evil (from that which is crushed a viper breaks out).

Clarke on weave the spider's web: "By their plots they weave nets, lay snares industriously, with great pains and artifice, whereby they may entangle and involve their poor neighbors in intricacies and perplexities, and so devour them, as the spider weaves her web to catch flies, and then to feed on them." But their webs will never cover them before God; Their webs will not become garments, nor will they cover themselves with their works.²⁰

¹⁶ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

¹⁸ ESV Study Bible Notes

¹⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

²⁰ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

Justice was not coming out of the courts, but legal maneuvering and loopholes had taken the place of straightforward decisions. The people were using and abusing the legal system for their own ends rather than allowing it to sit in judgment on their actions. They were trying to confuse the issues and lie their way out of their responsibilities. Instead of conceiving the truth that would issue in righteousness, they were conceiving mischief that would bear iniquity (cf. Job 15:35; James 1:15).²¹

⁵They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

Adder - does not lay eggs. Seed of the serpent?
"Spider's web" - not silk, but a trap.²²

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.²³

⁶Their 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.

The results of such a society are serpents' eggs and spider webs. Instead of receiving nourishment from the eggs, the eggs either poison or, if hatched, fatally attack the eater. Instead of receiving warmth from the beautifully woven web, the web fails to clothe and instead entangles its wearer. This was because the work the people expended to secure food and clothing was self-centered. People even resorted to physical violence to get what they wanted for themselves. Such a society promises much but delivers little, and what it does deliver turns around and kills it.²⁴

⁷Their 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.

Quoted in Rom. 3:15-16.

"Feet" - Cf. Prov 1:16; Rom 3:15.

²¹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²² Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

²³ <http://rondaniel.com/library/23-Isaiah/Isaiah5901.php>

²⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

The act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil: Both hands and feet are given to sin. But it doesn't end there; even their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity.²⁵

Instead of running from evil, God's people were running to it, even hastily shedding innocent blood to secure their ends (cf. Rom. 3:15-17). Again Isaiah used "way" to describe the moral life. Their hands and feet only manifested what was in their hearts, however. Their imaginations and thought processes were corrupt. All human ways are utterly futile apart from the Lord's intervention. Note the repetition of "iniquity" four times in verses 3, 4, 6, and 7.

His highways are peace and redemption (11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 40:3; 49:11; 62:10), but the human highways are destruction and confusion (7:3; 33:8; 36:2; 59:7). In his way there is guidance and confidence (2:3; 30:12), but in our ways there is discord and strife (3:12; 8:11; 57:17; 65:2).²⁶

⁸The 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.

They have made themselves crooked paths; whoever takes that way shall not know peace: Their choice and the consequences are plain. Their crooked paths will never lead them into the way of peace, meaning peace in the full sense of shalom.

Paul quotes Isaiah 59:7-8 in Romans 3:15-17. He uses this passage, connected with other Old Testament passages, to demonstrate that man is a sinner from "head to toe."

In light of all this sin, it is amazing - absolutely amazing - that God's people could still believe (as they did in Isaiah 59:1) that the problem was with God, and not them!²⁷

⁹Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.

[**Therefore ...**] Therefore -- in view of our many sins we are subject to oppression by our enemies, and God Himself does not interpose to save us from them (Isa. 59:9-15).²⁸

The change of pronouns here indicates that there is another speaker. Instead of "your" and "their," it is "we" and "our" and "us" now. This is Israel's confession. They confess they are in darkness. They confess that their religious rituals have all been a pretense. Many folk need to do this in our day. I played golf with a dentist and a broker some time ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Both of these men told me how they came to know the Lord. Both of them had been members in rich liberal churches. They were both wealthy men. One of the men told me that one day he simply got tired of being a hypocrite, so he went to the Lord and confessed that he was a hypocrite and wanted reality. He accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior. Oh, how this is needed today! It could actually bring revival to our churches.²⁹

²⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

²⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

²⁷ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

²⁸ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

²⁹ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

Because they had denied justice and righteousness to others, the Israelites had not experienced justice or righteousness themselves, from the hands of God or men.

They had hoped for a bright future in view of God's promises, but their present condition was dark. They had expected to walk in the brightness of His presence, but they were groping in gloom because He had withdrawn the light of His presence from them (cf. 58:10).³⁰

9-15 Here the prophet, using first-person plural pronouns (us.... we.... our), identified with the people (cf. 6:5). Israel was so corrupt spiritually, without justice (cf. 59:4, 11, 14-15) and righteousness, that it was as if they were in darkness and were blind and dead. As a result, the oppressed were angry like growling bears and moaned like doves. They wanted justice and help but found none (v. 11). Isaiah confessed that the people were noted for their many... sins, deliberate rebellion (cf. 1:5; 58:1) against the Lord, lying, injustice, and dishonesty (59:12-15a).³¹

Therefore justice is far from us, nor does righteousness overtake us: Because God's people had no interest in justice, God did not bless them with it. Because God's people did not care about righteousness, God did not bless them with it. This is the principle of Jesus stated in Matthew 13:12: whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

We look for light, but there is darkness! Now, having given themselves over to darkness, when they want the light, it isn't there. When you always have the light to go to, the darkness feels "fun." It seems mysterious and adventurous. But when the light is taken away, we despair in the darkness.³²

¹⁰We 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*.

“Noonday” - Ps 91.

You see, they are in darkness. What a picture of the man who does not have a personal relationship with God!

But when Israel will make this confession -- and they will make it in the future -- to these specific charges, they also will repudiate their sins. My friend, our confessions to God should be specific and then the sins repudiated. Each sin should be confessed privately to God.

I have no heart to go through this list of Israel's sins -- I have problems enough with my own.³³

³⁰ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³¹ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

³² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

³³ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

¹¹We 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.

They could not even articulate their grief but simply growled and moaned like angry bears and pitiful doves (cf. Mark 7:34; John 11:38; Rom. 8:22-23). This lament closes as it began, with an admission that justice and salvation were far from God's people.³⁴

¹²For 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;

Our sins testify against us ... righteousness stands afar off: Now God's people are in a better place. They have had their reality check, and see things as they are. No longer do they blame the "shortened hand" of God, or His "heavy ear." They know it is because of their own sins that righteousness stands afar off.³⁵

The reason justice and salvation were far away was the Israelites' multiplied transgressions, sins, and iniquities. But they had finally acknowledged their condition (cf. Ps. 51:5). Therefore, hope was now possible, that God would step forward and deliver them (cf. 1 John 1:9).

Hatred of the consequences of sin and its destructive effects on one's own life are not necessarily evidence of true repentance. It is when we face sin as rebellion against the holy God who loves us that we begin to see it, in some degree, as he sees it.³⁶

¹³In 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.

The faithful confess their sins. Rather than distancing themselves from those responsible for the misdeeds, they acknowledge that they share culpability for their neighbors' sins.³⁷

¹⁴And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

¹⁵Yea, truth faileth; and he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw *it*, and it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

Tragic nature of sin and the lack of justice.³⁸

³⁴ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

³⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

³⁷ Jewish Study Bible Notes

³⁸ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

Because of Israel's willful, persistent rebellion (chapters 56-59), the nation became unable to take action against its sins.

Sin fills the vacuum left when God's truth no longer fills our life. Only God can defeat sin.³⁹

Because of her depraved condition (vv. 2-15a), no one but the Lord could save the nation. Being displeased with her injustice (cf. vv. 4, 9, 11, 14), He realized there was no one to intercede on her behalf. Isaiah was not saying that the Lord did not want to get involved, but that Israel was totally incapable of helping herself. Only God could help her. This is true of salvation in any era. No one can save himself. Only God can forgive sin and change a person's heart.⁴⁰

The LORD saw it, and it displeased Him, that there was no justice: The state of God's people was no mystery to the LORD. They cried out in Isaiah 59:12-15a, stating how desperate their condition was - and the LORD knew it all along.⁴¹

Where truth is lacking, as it was in Isaiah's society, the person who turns aside from evil to do good makes himself a prey to others who take advantage of him. This is the final irony of many ironies in this pericope. It corresponds to the earlier expressions of bad conditions resulting from iniquity (cf. vv. 4, 7-8). Isaiah was not advocating this type of behavior. He was saying that unless God intervenes for His people, this type of behavior is all that they can expect.⁴²

¹⁶And he saw that *there was no man*, and wondered that *there was no intercessor*: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

“Man” - Rev 5!

[he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor] Two things God saw:

1. That there was no man to redeem Israel.
2. That there was no intercessor.

There was no man qualified to govern, lead, and bring about the necessary reformation that would save the nation, and no man to pray whom God would hear. Therefore, God decided to intervene -- to bring the nation to its senses and save those that would submit to His program. To do this He would take the armor of righteousness and salvation, and the garments of zeal and vengeance (Isa. 59:17). In the fulfillment of this saving of the nation God will have to judge those worthy of judgment and save those worthy of salvation, as well as punish the enemies of Israel according to their deeds (Isa. 59:18). This will bring about the salvation of Israel, and the fear of and glory to God's name in all parts of the earth (Isa. 59:19). That this is yet future is clear from the fact that it has not happened and that it was to be accomplished at the second coming of the Messiah (Isa. 59:20-21).⁴³

³⁹ Life Application Study Bible.

⁴⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴¹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

⁴² <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴³ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

God would, in fact, act to rescue the nation from enemy armies (Assyria and Babylon) and to punish wicked Israelites as well. He would also rescue his people from sin. Because redemption is an impossible task for any human, God himself, as the Messiah, would personally step in to help (Romans 11:26, 27). Whether we sin once or many times, out of rebellion or out of ignorance, our sin separates us from God and will continue to separate us until God forgives us and removes it.⁴⁴

16-20 In His power (by His... arm; cf. v. 1 and comments on 40:10) God provided salvation, both spiritual and physical, for him (i.e., for Israel personified as a man). Like a warrior God goes forth to fight for His people. Righteousness is His breastplate and salvation is His helmet (cf. Paul's use of this imagery in Eph. 6:14, 17). God's other garments are vengeance and zeal. This verse (Isa. 59:17) means that God supplies righteousness and salvation (cf. v. 16) for His people as He zealously executes vengeance on His enemies (v. 18). Because of this, people everywhere will acknowledge His glory, overpowering majesty, and strength (like a pent-up flood let loose). When the Lord executes judgment on His enemies (at Christ's second coming), the Messiah will go to Zion. He will be the Redeemer (see comments on 41:14) of those Israelites who turn to Him in repentance (59:20). Showing their future hope, the nation was being encouraged to repent.⁴⁵

He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: Not only was the state of God's people bad; but no one among them took the lead in getting it right. Where was the man would lead the people in righteousness? He could not be found. Where was the intercessor who would plead God's case to the people, and the people's repentance to their God? No intercessor could be found.

Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him: God waited and waited for a disobedient Israel to turn to Him. He waited and waited for a man to lead them back to Him, or an intercessor to plead before Him. None arose; so the LORD did it Himself. If a man or an intercessor would have stepped forth, it would have saved Israel a lot of calamity. But the fact that no man, or no intercessor stepped forward didn't derail God's plan. He waited to work in partnership through a man. He waited to work through an intercessor. But God's work would still go forth if none arose!⁴⁶

His Arm: The "arm of the LORD" is a phrase that is used exclusively to refer to the Messiah in Isaiah. See Isaiah 51:9 Salvation and the "arm of YHWH are linked together in those passages. Thus here the introduction to the next section is being introduced. This is cleared a little by the next reference to the messianic mission in verse 17 where the name "Jesus" and the word "salvation" are the same and also in verse 20 just below this where the obvious messianic phrase "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion," is used. This chapter ends properly with the reintroduction of the Messiah who has not been mentioned as often in chapters 54 to 59 as would be expected after the crescendo of chapter 53,--the Gospel in Isaiah. From chapter 54 to 59 the material has emphasized why the Jewish nation was alienated from God, That is: that although they perfunctorily kept all religious ordinances they were preoccupied with worldliness and cared more for the things of the age than for the appearance of Zion. Following this section there

⁴⁴ Life Application Study Bible.

⁴⁵ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁴⁶ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

is a return to the emphasis on Messiah's kingdom that is described more fully in the introduction to the last section which you may look at here.⁴⁷

God also saw that there was no human being who could mediate between Himself and His people, who could appeal effectively to Him for them (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1). Aaron and Phinehas had done this for Israel in the past (Num. 17:12-13; 25:7). So God Himself acted in power to deliver them, in faithfulness to His promises.⁴⁸

¹⁷For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Compare this armor with Eph. 6:10-18.

He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head: No man stepped forward to work with the LORD, so the LORD puts on his armor and goes forth to destroy His enemies, protect His people, and glorify His name!

Most people don't pick up the connection between Isaiah 59:17-18 and Paul's comments on our spiritual armor in Ephesians 6:10-17. In that passage, Paul calls that armor the whole armor of God, and it is God's armor in the sense that it belongs to Him - after all, He uses it here in Isaiah 59:17-18 - and He allows us to use it to fight for Him.

We may see a connection. If we don't put on the armor of God and fight for Him, then eventually God will put it on Himself and fight for His glory. But God's preference is to work in and through us, with us using His armor.⁴⁹

Salvation: This is one of the several verses in Isaiah where the word "salvation" stands alone with no preformatives or sufformatives and is equal to the name Jesus. It is interesting that in all these places the context is messianic and 3 of the 5 places also have the word NAZAR in the same contexts.⁵⁰

¹⁸According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense.

God's response. God brings justice, which is good news for the faithful and dreadful news for everyone else. The phrasing here is often used of foreign nations in the Bible; here the guilty among Israel bear the brunt of divine wrath along with evildoers from other nations.⁵¹

⁴⁷ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa54-59.htm>

⁴⁸ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁴⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

⁵⁰ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa54-59.htm>

⁵¹ Jewish Study Bible Notes

¹⁹So 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, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.

“Flood” - Dan 9.

[from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun] It is interesting to note that the nations of the world are at present divided into two camps, referred to as the West and the East.

[When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him] This passage is often quoted by Christians as referring to their struggles with satanic powers, and such is permissible by way of application, but it will have a literal fulfillment in the day that Antichrist and all nations will sweep into Palestine in an effort to destroy the Jews and stop Christ from setting up His kingdom in Jerusalem. This is known as the battle of Armageddon (Isa. 59:19-21; 63:1-6; Joel 2-3; Zech. 14; Rev. 19:11-21).

[like a flood] Half of Jerusalem will be taken by this flood of nations before Christ suddenly makes His appearance from heaven to defeat the Antichrist, becoming the standard that will be raised up against the enemy (Zech. 14:1-5,14-15). This could also refer to the great victory in the preservation of Israel when the flood of Rev. 12:13-17 will be about to carry the nation away.

[standard against him] God's standard and ensign which will save the people in that day is Jesus Christ (note, Isa. 11:10-12). To prove this the next two verses picture Christ as Israel's Redeemer coming from heaven to save the nation (Isa. 59:20-21; Rom. 11:25-27).⁵²

The end result will be wonderful: So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun. In His ultimate victory - which He wants us to share in, but will accomplish with or without us - the glory of the LORD will be known and respected from east to west.

When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD will lift up a standard against him. The enemies of the LORD will never triumph over Him. Even if they come in like a flood, and seem unstoppable, the LORD will lift up a battle-standard against him, and he will be stopped. God gives His people the glorious privilege of being more than conquerors (Romans 8:37), but will win it with or without us.⁵³

To fear the name of the Lord is the right response to him (Deut. 28:58; Neh. 1:11; Ps. 61:5; 86:11; Mal. 4:2). This passage reflects the expectation that all kinds of people will know the Lord and fear his name (cf. 2 Chron. 6:33; Ps. 102:15; Mal. 1:11). the west . . . the rising of the sun. Opposite directions, suggesting the entire world (cf. Isa. 45:6; 52:10; Mal. 1:11). a rushing stream . . . the wind. The power of God, applied with double force.⁵⁴

⁵² Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁵³ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

⁵⁴ ESV Study Bible Notes

²⁰And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.

“Redeemer” - Acts 15:14-17. (Comes after Church completion of Church!)

Goel - Lev 25:25,48; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:7,11,14; Ruth 3:12-13; 4:4-6; Jer 50:34; Jn 10:11,18.⁵⁵

Many people ask, "Will the whole nation be saved?" No, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Those saved will only be a remnant. And there appears to be only a remnant in the church who are actually saved.

But the Redeemer is coming some day to Zion, and at that time there will be a great confession of sin. Zechariah 12:10 tells us about it: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."⁵⁶

[shall come to Zion] Five Things Christ Will Do at the Second Coming

1. Come to Zion -- Jerusalem (not London, Washington, or any other place on earth, Isa. 59:20; Zech. 14:4).
2. Come to them that turn from sin in Jacob or Israel (Isa. 59:20; Zech. 12:10 -- Zech. 13:1; 14:1-5,14; Rom. 11:25-29).
3. Make a new covenant with them in that day (Isa. 59:21; 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 57:8; 61:8; Jer. 31:31; Heb. 10:16).
4. Pour out the Holy Spirit upon them (Isa. 59:21; 32:15; 34:16; 44:3; Joel 2:28-32; Zech. 12:10 -- Zech. 13:1).
5. Put the words of God in their mouths and in the mouths of eternal generations to come (Isa. 59:21).

[them that turn from transgression in Jacob] Salvation of Israel

Those that will turn from transgression in Israel in that day, will be the one-third of the nation who will come through the tribulation alive, the two-thirds being killed (Zech. 13:9). They will be the ones to say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord (Mt. 23:39) -- the ones that will be born again in a day and make the nucleus around which the others from all the tribes will be gathered in the Millennium (Isa. 11:10-12, notes). They are the "all Israel" of Rom. 11:25-29, and the Judah of Zech. 14:14.

[turn from transgression in Jacob] No one in Israel or among the Gentiles will be saved and blessed by God in the eternal program until he turns from sin. This is the reason Israel is now scattered among the nations, and why God has not been able to fulfill His everlasting covenants with them. He can never do so until they turn from sin to Him and holy living (cp. Mt. 18:3; Jn. 3:3-5).⁵⁷

The Redeemer will come to Zion: After speaking in the third-person through the prophet, now the LORD speaks in the first-person through the prophet. When He speaks, He declares: the Redeemer - the goel - will come to Zion.

⁵⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Isaiah, khouse.org

⁵⁶ Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁵⁷ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

The goel - sometimes translated kinsman-redeemer, here simply as Redeemer -had a specifically defined role in Israel's family life. The kinsman-redeemer was responsible to buy a fellow Israelite out of slavery (Leviticus 25:48). He was responsible to be the "avenger of blood" to make sure the murderer of a family member answered to the crime (Numbers 35:19). He was responsible to buy back family land that had been forfeited (Leviticus 25:25). And he was responsible to carry on the family name by marrying a childless widow (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). In these, we see that the goel, the kinsman-redeemer, was responsible to safeguard the persons, the property, and the posterity of the family.

When the New King James Version capitalizes Redeemer, it does so rightly - because our goel is Jesus Christ. He is our near kinsman because He has added perfect humanity to His deity. He is the one who buys us out of slavery. He is the one who avenges wrongs done to us. He protects our inheritance, and blesses and guards our posterity. This promise of the LORD in Isaiah 59:20 could be reworded, "I will send My Messiah, the Redeemer for all humanity, Jesus of Nazareth!"

Who does the Redeemer come to? To those who turn away from transgression. The goel only worked for those who asked for His services, and knew they needed Him.⁵⁸

God would redeem His people, as the next of kin came to save the helpless widow. But it is His people who have turned away from their transgressions that He saves (cf. Rom. 11:25-27). They will have given up on their ability to deliver themselves, or to secure deliverance from another source, and will have turned to the Lord (cf. 55:6). That is the picture of "Jacob" that Isaiah gave in the preceding verses (vv. 9-15a; cf. 58:1, 14). Repentance in the sense of forsaking sin, apart from faith, is not a condition for deliverance from sin's penalty, but God only delivers believers from the power of sin who seek Him for deliverance.⁵⁹

'Those in Jacob who turn back from sin:' It is the penitent Israelites, not the whole nation, who will enjoy the salvation long predicted and thus far delayed.⁶⁰

²¹As 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.

“Covenant” - Ct. Jer 31:31-34; Joel 2:20.

[As for me] As for Me -- God speaking, not the prophet (Isa. 59:20-21).

[my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words] Three things of God:

1. My covenant
2. My Spirit (Holy Spirit upon Isaiah)
3. My words

[My spirit] Another proof of three divine persons:

⁵⁸ https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Isa/Isa-59.cfm?a=738001

⁵⁹ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

⁶⁰ Jewish Study Bible Notes

1. The Lord (Jehovah, one person)
2. The Redeemer (Messiah, another person sent by Jehovah)
3. My Spirit (Holy Spirit, sent by Jehovah), still another person (Jn. 14:16,26)

[thy mouth] Israel's mouth, not the prophet's.

[from henceforth and for ever] Found four times in Scripture, expressing eternity (Isa. 59:21; 9:7; Ps. 125:2; 131:3).⁶¹

God has made a covenant that the Redeemer is coming to Zion. There will never be a time when this promise will be entirely forsaken, for this is God's purpose. It will be fulfilled in His good time.⁶²

When the Holy Spirit dwells within his people, they change. Their former desires no longer entice them; now their chief aim is to please God. We who are Christians today are the heirs of this prophecy; we are able to respond to God's will and distinguish between good and evil because the Holy Spirit dwells within us (John 14:26; Philippians 2:13; Hebrews 5:14).⁶³

When the Messiah returns in judgment (v. 18), He will inaugurate His covenant (elsewhere called the New Covenant, Jer. 31:31), pouring His Spirit on believing Israelites (cf. Ezek. 36:27a; Joel 2:29) and instilling His words within them (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:27b).⁶⁴

My Spirit who is upon you, and My words ... shall not depart from your mouth ... from this time and forevermore: The covenant God makes with His people promises an abiding Spirit and an enduring word. God accomplishes His purpose in people and through all creation through both the Spirit and the word.⁶⁵

In closing, God promised with a covenant promise that He would not withdraw His Spirit or His Word from His people on whom He would place them (cf. Jer. 31:31-44). This is a reference to the New Covenant. The Spirit would abide on His people forever, and His Word would remain in their mouths so they could be the witnesses to Him that He created them to be. Since this has not yet happened, it appears that it will happen at the Lord Jesus' second advent (v. 18).

There is debate about whether the Lord has already given His Spirit permanently to all His people, but there is no question that He has not yet made His people the witnesses that they should be. He has given the Spirit to Christians, but not to all Israelites (cf. Joel 2:29). Christians are relatively ineffective witnesses now, but Israel will be a faithful witness in the Millennium (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:27b). Israel will witness to the greatness of Yahweh and will draw the nations to Him (cf. 2:2-3; 60:1-3). This is the purpose for which He will redeem them.⁶⁶

And as for me. God declares his commitment to his people. My covenant with them is the messianic servant, the Redeemer of v. 20 (cf. 42:6; 49:8). My Spirit that is upon you, i.e., upon the Messiah (cf. 61:1). my words. All the words that God speaks to his people through his

⁶¹ Dake's Annotated Reference Bible

⁶² Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

⁶³ Life Application Study Bible.

⁶⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary

⁶⁵ <http://www.moellerhaus.com/isa54-59.htm>

⁶⁶ <http://soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/isaiah.pdf>

prophets (cf. Deut. 18:18). But the promise does not apply only to the prophets who first spoke God's words, for their offspring and their children's offspring shall also have these words and will speak them to others. This promise implies that God's people would preserve his words spoken by the prophets; this process ultimately resulted in the written words of the Bible.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ ESV Study Bible Notes