

Isaiah 57-59 • Idolatry, Fasting and the Lord's Salvation

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Let's open our Bibles tonight to the Book of Isaiah as we continue our study here on Wednesday night through the Old Testament. And we are in the 57th chapter of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 57.

This chapter begins with the Lord addressing the southern kingdom of Judah, talking about their spiritual adultery. And in the conversation that He has here through the prophet Isaiah. You're going to notice that He speaks of their spiritual adultery using the terminology that would typically apply to physical adultery, cheating, unfaithfulness.

And the reason God uses language that speaks of physical adultery when referring to spiritual adultery is because that's the way He perceives it. That's the way God perceives spiritual unfaithfulness, is the same way that you and I would perceive physical unfaithfulness.

And you can imagine the difficulty of that kind of pain and perhaps that helps us for a moment to understand a little bit of the pain that God feels in His heart when His covenant people who are chosen and special. And whose land has been set apart. The people themselves have been set apart to worship God, to know God, to love God, and then to be a blessing to the whole world turn and begin to have spiritual relations with the pagan deities of their neighbors. And it's very much an act of unfaithfulness and that's why God uses language that for you and I brings up difficulty.

We're uncomfortable with it and I don't mean to talk about unfaithfulness tonight to open up any wounds that anyone might have related to that. It's simply important for us to understand how God feels about these kinds of things. Because I think there's just way too much of a tendency on our part to assume God doesn't feel much of anything because, He's God and He's all powerful and He can do anything He wants to do.

And yet, I believe the heart of God breaks concerning the unfaithfulness of His people. We're going to see some of that tonight. But it begins with a couple of

interesting verses that I know have been read, and interpreted, and applied many times out of their context.

It goes like this, *“The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; ² he enters into peace; they rest in their beds (and that's a euphemism for the grave) who walk in their uprightness.” (ESV)*

I want you to stop there for just a moment because these are interesting verses given in their context, all right. They are referring to the fact that Judah is about to suffer swift and very certain judgment from the Lord in the form of the Babylonian Empire coming into their kingdom and conquering them. Killing many people, taking the rest of them captive to their Babylonian exile, which, of course, will last for 70 years. That's all coming down the pike.

So God begins to speak here of those among them who are righteous. In other words, in right standing with God. And He, interestingly enough, says through Isaiah, that these people are taken away. And of course He's referring to taken away in death in this case, but they are taken away and yet no one seems to comprehend any possible reason as to why.

It says, *“no one lays it to heart;”* no one stops to think about it. But the Lord reveals here through Isaiah that these individuals are taken away so that they might not suffer the calamity that is upcoming. In other words, they are taken away to be spared from judgment and that's an interesting concept, is it not? Particularly in light of the fact that many times we read verses like this and we learn a great deal about the heart of God. The heart of God.

If you were asked the question, do you see the heart of God in these 2 verses? We'd have to say, yeah, I think we do. Well, what do you see as the heart of God expressed in these 2 verses? Well, it looks to me as I read these verses, as if God is communicating that it is His heart to spare the righteous from the calamity that comes from judgment by removing them from that situation.

That's an interesting thought process, is it not? Particularly in light of the fact that we've been studying on Sunday morning for the last several weeks, at least through our 1st and 2nd Thessalonian studies, about the rapture or the catching away of the church. And essentially what that is, is God sparing His righteous saints. And we know that our righteousness is through Jesus Christ imputed to us by His death, burial, and resurrection. But He is going to remove the body of Christ from the face of the earth before He pours out His judgment.

Now, I know there's a lot of people that disagree with me on that and you might even be some of them and that's okay. We're not going to part ways over any disagreement related to the timing of the rapture in relation to the tribulation. That's okay. It's not something we're going to divide over. But what I'm telling you is, I believe it is consistent with the heart of God. I believe it is consistent with what we're seeing right here in Isaiah 57, verses 1 and 2.

The fact is, God expresses His heart here knowing that judgment is coming down the line for the kingdom of Judah. And He says that the righteous are taken away. They are removed and in so doing or by so doing, the Lord spares them. They're spared, they're taken away from calamity.

Now the Lord goes on here in verse 3 to speak about those who are not taken away to be spared of calamity. And He says, "*But you, ...*" Now remember, we want to make note of the word, but, whenever we see it in the Bible, because we've just created a contrast, we've created a difference. We were going this way, now we turn around and we're going this way. Because the word, but, always introduces that change of thought and like, we're talking to a different audience now, and that's exactly what's happening.

He says, "³ *But you, draw near, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman.*" Well, we know who He's talking to now, don't we? He's talking to the unfaithful. Now the Lord is addressing the unfaithful.

"⁴ *Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit,*" And of course, the word transgression is always an important for one for us to see in the Word of God. Because although some people equate it with sin, just general sin, the word transgression, as you know, means a willful violation.

I knew that I wasn't supposed to do that and I did it anyway. Whereas a sin can very easily be a sin of ignorance, I didn't realize it. In fact, some of you may have even been reading through the Bible. Maybe after you got saved and you were reading through the Bible and found out something you were doing was a sin and it was like, ah!, I didn't know that.

I get questions all the time from people, is such and such a sin? And what they're saying usually is, I'm not sure so what does the Bible have to say about this? Well, guess what? Once I tell them, or once I show them the passage, now if they do it, it's a transgression. That's what the way the Bible lays it out. It's

now a transgression because it was done with the full knowledge that this was in fact wrong and a sin.

Verse 5, He says, “*you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree,...*” And again, here's some of that language of sexual activity, which, sometimes paganism involves sexual immorality. He goes on to talk about they “*...who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks?*”

And that is how deranged and awful became the thinking of the Jewish people who were chosen by God to understand the preciousness of children as a gift from the Lord. But have now deteriorated so much, that they are actually worshiping Molech and they are sacrificing their firstborn to this pagan God; literally sacrificing them alive. And it's horrible, it's horrible.

He talks about more pagan objects of worship saying in verse 6, “*Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I relent for these things?*” Notice a drink offering and a grain offering, those are elements of the worship of YAHWEH.

Do you see how they have incorporated them now into their pagan practices. It's not that they've just kind of said, okay, here's what God taught us, and now we're going to leave that all behind and go over here and worship like pagans do. They brought some of the elements along and that is often what happens. That is often what happens, when we try to mix Christianity.

Well, I'm talking about today. In their case, it was Judaism with paganism, but Christianity's been merged with paganism too, and you probably know some of the history behind that. There was a point in time when the Roman Catholic Church during the time of the Dark Ages, it was literally in the Dark Ages, or that time frame we call the Dark Ages.

The Roman Catholic Church interpreted the kingdom of God to be a physical kingdom. They believed that they lived literally, physically in the kingdom of God. And therefore to enhance and to enlarge the kingdom of God, it was their responsibility to bring people into the Catholic Church. Not into Christ, but into the Catholic Church.

And so they went around and they had armies. The Roman Catholic Church literally had an army. And they would conquer nations; pagan nations. And at the edge of a sword, they would basically tell people convert to Roman Catholicism or die. And of course, the people, they didn't want to die like

anyone else, so they said, well, sure, we'll convert. They took them out into the ocean, they did these mass baptisms, and they said, okay, now you are now Roman Catholic.

They never introduced them to Christ, they never talked about the cross, they never talked about what it meant to be born again. They just converted people into Roman Catholicism who were pagans.

Well, guess what those pagans did? They held on to their paganism, they had not been converted truly to Christ. They had not been born again, they had not been renewed. They simply brought their pagan ways into their... Of course, they were now learning Roman Catholic traditions and practices, which they took on, they did, because they didn't care. They figured...

Pagans are usually pretty easy to win over to some kind of religious activity, especially if losing your life is on the end of that stick. All these things began to get introduced into Roman Catholicism over the years, during the Dark Ages.

And it got so bad by the 1500s that when a young man by the name of Martin Luther, who was a Roman Catholic priest. When he finally got saved by reading the Bible, and he looked at what Roman Catholicism had become in his day, which was such a powerful departure from what he was reading in the simple Word of God, he was horrified.

And he decided he needed to do something to try to put an end to it. And the rest is history after he came up with 95 theses, which he nailed onto the door of a church in Wittenberg. And it's referred to as the famous, 95 theses of Martin Luther. And essentially the reformation began at that point when he said enough, enough. We've taken Christianity and we've merged it with paganism.

And I'm not throwing stones, but there are elements of paganism that remain, to this day. Because Martin Luther essentially wasn't all that effective at changing, frankly, the Roman Catholic Church. All he did is started a counter movement, called Protestantism. But this is something we've seen, this is historically something we've seen.

It was happening in Israel, well, southern kingdom of Judah. God's calling them out on it. You've taken your drink offerings and your grain offerings and you've offered them to these pagan deities. And so God, literally asked the question, "*Shall I relent*" for you doing these kinds of things?

He says in verse 7, *“On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice.”* And again, to set their bed, it speaks of that spiritual adultery, but again, many of these pagan practices involved sexual immorality.

“⁸ Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.” Again, we're seeing the language of physical idolatry applied to spiritual idolatry because that's the way God sees that kind of unfaithfulness to the Lord.

Verse 9, *“You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol. ¹⁰ You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, “It is hopeless”; you found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint.*

¹¹ Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me?”

And you know what? This right here, the last thing the Lord says here through Isaiah is one of the most interesting forms of self deception that we human beings can engage in. And that is, when I'm engaging in a particular act of sin and God doesn't judge me in the next 24 hours after I commit it, or even 24 days, or 24 months, my assumption is, well, must be okay.

I mean, God didn't judge me, I didn't drop dead. I did it, I felt guilty for a while, but God didn't judge me. And so I begin to lose my fear of God because I lose my fear of judgment. And that's what God is saying here. He says, I held my peace, even for a long time, but what was the result?

Did you fear me? No, you didn't fear me. In fact, you became even more brazen in your sin. See, that's the point of the whole thing. And we forget that God's patience and the fact that God doesn't strike someone immediately with judgment is because He is long suffering and He is gracious and merciful and He wants to give them time to repent. But we interpret that time to repent as this long leash that God has given us to go and live the way we want. And it's just, it's literally a kind of self-deception.

Verse 12, He says, *“I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but (let me tell you something) they will not profit you. (Wow) ¹³ When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you!...”*

Because He knows they're going to cry out because the Babylonians are on their way. The Babylonians will come, they will conquer them, they will destroy the city, they will ruin the temple, they will take people captive, and the people will cry out. God just basically says, hey, on that day, when you cry out, cry out to your idols and see if they do anything for you.

Fact of the matter is, He says, *“The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away.”*

Now this is interesting because right here in the middle of verse 13, you're going to notice that things are going to change. God changes His point of discussion and He says, *“But...”* remember there's that word again, we just did a change of direction. *“But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain.”*

¹⁴ *And it shall be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way.”* ¹⁵ *For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

These are some of the most beautiful verses you're going to read in the Bible right here. I love this. God says, you know what? I am the God who inhabits eternity. I am the God who's high and lifted up but I'm not the God who's out of reach. Yes, I am exalted above all, however, I also dwell with Him who is contrite and of a lowly spirit, or if you will, a lowly heart, to revive such a person. To revive, isn't that amazing?

God is far off from those who are proud, and arrogant, and full of themselves, but those who have been emptied of themselves, who are humble in heart, broken, He's right there. He's right there by your side, He's right there with you. Oh, that's such a wonderful insight.

Verse 16, *“For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made. ¹⁷ Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. ¹⁸ I*

have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ¹⁹ creating the fruit of the lips.

Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD, “and I will heal him. ²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹ There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.””

We talked about this in one of the services on Sunday, I might've only done it in one. But, we talked about the fact that the world is searching after peace and they're not finding it of course. Because peace is only found in the Prince of peace and in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, who has made peace between God and men.

We can now have peace with God because Jesus has made that peace possible and it says here that for the wicked, there is no peace. They can look, and they can look, and they can search, and they can do whatever they can find to do, but they will not find peace. And they might convey to you the idea that they've got it, but they don't, it's not there. It only comes through Christ, at least to be a lasting peace.

Okay, Isaiah chapter 58. Isaiah 58 is all about fasting, true fasting. You guys understand fasting, right? The withholding of food and possibly even drink for a period of time in order to devote oneself to prayer. But fasting is often related to sorrow in the scriptures, it's often related to sorrow, and you need to know that too, not always, but often.

In fact when Jesus was asked why His disciples didn't fast, He said, how can they fast while the bridegroom is with them? This is not a time to be sorrowful, the bridegroom is here. He says, but the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. (Mark 2:18-20)

There's a connection there to focusing our attention onto the Lord, getting everything that distracts out of the way. And you think, well, how is eating such a distraction? Well, for you and I, it's not nearly the distraction that it was for the Jews. You and I get hungry, we go to the fridge or we pull something out of the cupboard, put it in a pan or in a bowl, put it in the microwave for 60 seconds, and we're ready to go.

Well, that was not the way they prepared meals. In biblical times, it was... You remember when Abraham had the Lord and those 2 angels that came along with him came and dropped in on him. And he told his wife, go get a goat and

slaughter it, and then knead some bread, and bake some bread, we're going to make a meal. It's like, good grief, how long did that take?

Have you ever gone over to somebody's house and they invited you over for dinner and they said, hey, come on over, come on over at 6 and have dinner. So you go over there and you're kind of planning your day thinking that you're going to go over there and have dinner at 6.

And then you get over there to find out that they're going to grill and he hasn't even started it when you get there at 6 and he's in the middle of talking to you. And he doesn't get around to even lighting the grill until 6:45 and then he's got to sit there and go like this with the coals and that takes till about 7:15 and then he puts them in, and I'm dying.

I've been timing this thing out all afternoon to eat at 6 and now it's 9 o'clock and we're sitting down to eat. Well, we're not used to that. We're not used to that whole preparation sort of a thing. But you can imagine, right, when there wasn't the kind of refrigeration and instant food kind of stuff that we have. Which I'm sure is so good for us, but they had to do things the long way. Can you imagine?

To withhold and to say, I'm not going to eat. That was to free up your day, especially if you're a woman. Your day just got freed up, you can go for a walk.

Fasting was a huge part of coming to God without distraction, focusing their attention to Him in prayer, seeking His face, right? But remember something, fasting often was connected to repentance as well, and that's huge.

You'll remember when Jonah went to basically give the message of the Lord to the city of Nineveh; the capital of Assyria. And he told them, if you don't repent, God's going to destroy this place. And you'll remember that the king ordered everybody to wear sackcloth, and to fast, and to repent, and to turn from their wicked ways. And the Lord relented, you'll remember, even though it was a wicked city. The Lord saw their act of repentance that was connected to fasting.

Anyway, let's see what the Lord has to say to His people related to fasting. He says, "*Cry aloud; do not hold back; lift up your voice like a trumpet; (this is the Lord speaking to Isaiah) declare to my people their transgression, (there's that word again) to the house of Jacob their sins.*" And so now He's going to go on to explain kind of the spiritual environment during this time of rampant sin.

“² Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.”

Now stop there for just a minute, I need to explain what's going on here. God is about to confront them with their duplicity. But this kind of surprises us a little bit because it begins by saying, the Lord telling Isaiah hey, confront them with their transgressions and sins. And so you're okay, we know what's going on here.

They are just absolutely going bonkers with all kinds of horror. They've left all the understanding of God behind and they're just running after their flesh. Oh no, oh no, that's not it at all. They have retained a religious element in their lifestyle and yet they're continuing to sin and that's what's going on. He says, they seek me as if they really want to know me, they come and say, we delight in knowing your ways.

Let's see what else the Lord says, verse 3. He quotes the people saying, *“‘Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’ Behold, (the Lord now speaks) in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.*

⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day (just a day) for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?”

Do you understand what God is asking? He's saying, is that what fasting is to you guys? Just a day to put on the garments that are in keeping with fasting and to go through the motions of seeking the Lord when in fact your hearts haven't changed. There's nothing that's changed about the way you live, you're just putting on these religious accoutrements and it's all external, God says to them.

God begins to say in verse 6, and this is very important, *“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?”*

What is He talking about? He's talking about repentance. He says, when you're fasting, I want you to turn around and go the other way because fasting and

repentance go together. Is that not the fasting that I want you to do where you actually living differently.

Verse 7, *“Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (from your own people) ⁸ Then (He says) shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”*

God says, if you are honest and change your life, *“⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, ¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.*

¹¹ And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in. ¹³ “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;””

Why was the Sabbath so important to God? Why was the Sabbath so important to God for His people to keep it? Why was it such a big deal? Why is it that God attaches all these blessings to the keeping of the Sabbath? It's because the Sabbath is a picture of what you and I are doing right here, right now.

The Sabbath was all about resting and it was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Because when we put our faith in His finished work on the cross, we are resting in that work. We are not working to try to earn our salvation, but we are resting by faith in the finished work of Jesus.

We do keep the Sabbath today, we keep it not one day, but 7 days a week. In Jesus, by faith, we keep the Sabbath. But that's why it was such an important element in the worship of Israel. Because it was a picture of how they would one day put their faith in Messiah, His finished work to trust in the Lord and not

to trust in themselves. Because works are trusting in me, faith is trusting in God. And so God said to the Israelites as this picture of salvation, do not work, but rest and that was meant to be this beautiful foreshadowing of our faith in Jesus Christ. And that's why it was so huge to God related to the obedience of the people of Israel.

Verse 14 says, *“then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”* Wow!, true fasting, true fasting.

Isaiah chapter 59. The first 15 and a half verses of this chapter are an incredible confession of guilt. And as you read through this, I want you to think about this certainly within the context of what's going on here as it relates to the southern kingdom of Judah. But I want you to also think about this. I want you to think about how these first 15 and a half verses apply as a confession concerning the sin of the United States of America.

Because there's something God is going to say through these verses to our hearts and that is that when you turn away from Me, society unravels. It becomes chaotic, it becomes lawless, it becomes dangerous, it becomes wicked.

And this is a confession of that unraveling, which was happening in the southern kingdom of Judah, which of course brought the judgment of God. And which is happening also in our country; the United States of America, happening all around us. And we're even seeing an elevating of that lawlessness in our own time and just recently.

As I go through and read these verses, think about this as a prayer of confession to God for our own country.

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; ² but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

³ For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness. ⁴ No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.

⁵ They hatch adders' eggs; they weave the spider's web; he who eats their eggs dies, and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched. ⁶ Their webs will not serve

as clothing; men will not cover themselves with what they make. Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands.”

Did you notice there in those couple of verses where God speaks of the deeds of men as their clothing? The deeds of men as their clothing? Did you catch that? And He says, He refers to them like spider webs and He says, they're not going to cover you. What is our clothing? What is our clothing? Are we not clothed with the righteousness of Christ? Are we not clothed in the garments of His righteousness?

And those garments are not from our works, are they? They're from His, from what He did and they will cover. Believe you me, those will cover. Are our sins covered? Are our sins atoned for, which is what cover means? Yes, absolutely. But you can see how the Lord is bringing out this sort of a thing.

Verse 7, *“Their feet run to evil, and they are swift to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; desolation and destruction are in their highways.”*

You might remember, actually the apostle Paul uses those words in Romans to speak of the sinful condition of both Jews and Gentiles alike under sin.

“⁸ The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths; they have made their roads crooked; no one who treads on them knows peace.

⁹ Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.

¹⁰ We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men. ¹¹ We all growl like bears; we moan and moan like doves; we hope for justice, but there is none; for salvation, (in that case, this word means deliverance) but it is far from us.

¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities:

¹³ transgressing, and denying the Lord, and turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.

¹⁴ Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, (boy, isn't that true) and uprightness cannot enter. ¹⁵ Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil (and that means the

person who wants to serve God and walk with God. The person *who departs from evil) makes himself a prey.*” What does that mean? That means the person who wants to walk with God and live righteously becomes endangered among the people of that kind of a society.

They want to kill him, they want to get rid of him. Isn't that crazy? *“The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.”* What was going on? Pure anarchy, pure chaos, where the man who wants to live a godly life is now in danger of losing his life.

And it says in the middle of verse 15, *“The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.”*¹⁶ *He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.”*

And make no mistake about it, that is a prophecy of Messiah right there in that verse 16. He saw that there was no justice and He saw that there was no man to intercede. There was nobody to mitigate, no one to mediate the sinfulness of mankind.

And so what does He do? His own arm and the word arm, remember, what does it mean? It always means strength. *“His own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.”* There was no righteousness to be found in the sons of men so what happened? His own righteousness upheld Him.

Look what it goes on to say. This is amazing because we're talking about Messiah here, guys. Make no mistake, this is about the coming of Messiah.

*“¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”*¹⁸ *According to their deeds, so will he repay, wrath to his adversaries, repayment to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render repayment.*

¹⁹ So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; for he will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives.”

Isn't it interesting that the Lord speaks of the coming of the Lord as a rushing stream, like rushing water. Do you know that of all the elements on the face of the earth, nothing is more powerful than rushing water? Not even wind and wind can do pretty incredible things.

Living, growing up as a kid in tornado alley, I saw a lot of pretty incredible things that wind did, water is stronger. The power of water is stronger, and it says that He will come like a rushing stream. So He picks the most powerful element in nature to depict this coming of the Lord.

And I love what it goes on to say in verse 20, *“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,”* (and that's called repentance) *declares the LORD.*” We're specifically speaking here of the coming of this Redeemer Messiah.

And then, this is amazing. He speaks of the result of his coming. ²¹ *“And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,” says the LORD, “from this time forth and forevermore.”*”

Wow!, powerful. So we get this beautiful picture of the coming of the Redeemer Messiah who shares His Spirit, puts His Word upon us and in our mouth. And it is passed along from believer to believer to believer. And the Word of God will never fade or change.