

Isaiah 59:1-20

Samantha Beattie

Isaiah 59 opens with the answer to a question asked by God's people, the Israelites, "Can God save us? Can God hear us?" The people of God are looking for deliverance and justice but are feeling unseen. They are in a place of desperation and have been seeking God's face, but He feels distant from them. From their perspective they have been faithful worshipers of God. They have observed the rituals and fasted, so why was God not responding to them the way they wanted Him to? Verse 2 gives us our answer. Their sin caused a separation between them and God.

The distance they felt was real. Verse 2 says, "...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." We see in verses 3 - 8 how their lives were overtaken by wickedness and evil deeds. While they were going through the motions of what it looked like to be a religious person (ex. fasting in Isaiah 58:3), their actions revealed the condition of their heart. They thought they could live an unrighteous life and still expect righteousness, blessing, and salvation from God. They expected justice from God but did not live lives marked by justice.

In verse 9 however the people acknowledge their sinful ways and take responsibility for the lack of righteousness and justice. They confess their sins before God. Then, in verses 14 - 15 we see how the consequences of their sinfulness have played out in their community. Their sinfulness created an environment lacking justice and truth.

But God does not leave them there. The second half of verse 15 reaffirms the answer given in verse 1 that God is present. He does see the injustice and it is evil in His sight. Verse 16 says that He saw that there was no one to intercede on the people's behalf. There was no one to bring salvation, but in contrast to the people, God's righteousness would be enough to redeem them. Finally, verse 20 promises that He will send a redeemer for those that turn from their sin.

This is a difficult passage of scripture. It is one that highlights our sin and the sinful, crooked world we live in. Have you ever hoped for light, but were surrounded by darkness like the people in verse 9? We fumble through life unable to see which way is up, in need of someone to remove our spiritual blindness just like verse those in verse 10. The Bible says that God hears us. Psalm 34:6 says, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles."

Be reminded that your sin separates you from a Holy God, but be encouraged that He promised to send a redeemer to save you from the wrath your sin deserves. We need a promise to give us hope for salvation, justice, and blessing just like the Israelites in Isaiah 59, and God fulfills that promise in Jesus. That is what we celebrate at Christmas time. So, evaluate your life. Have you felt distant from God? Maybe you are feeling the effects of living a life lacking in justice and righteousness. Heed the message of verse 18 that tells us the fate of those who do not repent and turn. Maybe you have never felt close to God. Please know that God sees the wickedness and sin and still sent His son to die on the cross for you to be redeemed.