

“Sin Deaf: Why Are and Aren’t Prayers Heard?”

Isaiah 59:1-21

Context: Chapter 59 of Isaiah is part of the eleven concluding chapters whose theme is salvation from a post-exilic perspective. The context flows from a call to obedience that honors God through Sabbath-rest, a rest in God that avoids self-centered desires and petty legalistic rules. Historically, the chapter reflects the description of a call for the Remnant to repent under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. Their rebuilding of a devastated Jerusalem is symbolic of the coming of a New Jerusalem built by the hand of God; and so concludes Isaiah’s book. Struggles, hopes, sins, fears, confessions, forgiveness, and expectations of the returning Remnant all foreshadow the experiences of a new Remnant during the Church age. The chapters that follow disclose the future experience of glory and gladness that flow from a release of the Remnant out of their affliction. **Life Principle:** God turns a deaf ear to my prayers if I am habitually and recklessly multiplying my sin before Him.

1. Sin – Isaiah 59:1-8

The Lord demands that attention be paid to His capacity both to save and to answer prayer. Further, the Remnant needs to understand that God turns a deaf ear to their prayer when they live in perpetual, wanton sin.

2. Sorrow – Isaiah 59:9-14

Consequences of persistent sin shroud all hope for the relief of salvation with a dark cloak of despair. The sinner searching for a way out is depicted as a blind man aimlessly groping around an unknown room looking for liberation. Exasperated by failure, he murmurs, moans, and multiplies his sin. He shrinks back from righteousness into a life of self-deception, stumbling about until destruction and death take their toll around him and finally on him.

3. Redemption – Isaiah 59:15-21

The Lord was appalled by humanity’s depravity, injustice, and absence of anyone willing to serve Him as an emancipator. Thus, because of His very nature, He Himself paid the price of redemption to eternally liberate the repentant and He will exact vengeance on His adversaries.

Study questions:

- Isaiah 59:2 declares that God turns His face away from those in habitual, reckless sin. As a **Bible study method**, study the concept of sin (cf. *TWOT1577e* and *TDNT v.1/267ff*). From your study, describe how the sinful action and its penalty are related. Read Isaiah 59:3-15. What do the sin and its consequences do to the individual and community? Has the consequence of someone else’s sin: (1) left you in gloom, (2) caused others to moan or grumble, (3) multiplied into other sins, or (4) disrupted peace in the faith community (cp. Joshua 7:1)? Are you in sin, and if so, how is it disturbing you and others around you? Is your sin affecting the community of GracePoint?
- The Scripture is replete with examples that mirror a sinner groping in the darkness of sin and blindness in God’s light (cp. Isaiah 59:10; Acts 9:3ff ct Matthew 17:2ff). What similarities, if any, do you see when comparing and contrasting the Isaiah passage with the examples given? Do any other examples come to mind? Can you think of a time when you shrank back into the darkness of sin when God exposed your iniquity? Do you have a troublesome sin that, when exposed by His light, causes you to hide it from others? What is the proper biblical response (cp. 1 John 1:8-10; James 5:16)?
- God promises eternal security to the Remnant in Isaiah 59:21. How does this promise support our doctrine of the assurance of the believer’s eternal salvation (see Ephesians 1:13-14; 3:14-21 in footnote 15 ‘**On Salvation**’ in our **doctrinal statement** under **what we believe** at www.gracepointfellowship.org)? Who are the offspring in Isaiah 59:21 (cp. 1 Corinthians 4:14ff; Galatians 4:19; 3 John 1:4)? What does the Holy Spirit have to do with God’s Word being eternally present in your speech and the speech of your offspring?

Transformation exercise:

Meditate on Isaiah 59:1-2. Do you feel that your prayers are not being heard by God? If so, ask the Holy Spirit to bring someone into your life who can expose any sin that may be hindering your prayer life. If you already know your besetting sin, ask for the Spirit’s conviction and strength to develop a habit of repentance and renewal.