

The Glorious, Mighty and Powerful Right Hand of the Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, let's look again at this passage from Isaiah 59, and I'd like to focus on what's happening really in the whole chapter, but particularly, bearing in mind these words we have at the beginning, Behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, or is the ear dull that it cannot hear. This really is a statement that we all surely need reminding of, and it is an answer to, it's a response to a question, and in fact it may well be even someone here today, it may be something that some of you are also asking, where is God? Where is God in all that's happening in our nation? Where is God in all that's happening with our moral standards, which seem to be declining more and more?

May well be asking, where is God in all that's happening in the Western Isles? Where is God in our communities? And perhaps even asking, where is God in my own personal life?

Where is God? Well, the people in Isaiah's time over two and a half thousand years ago, they found themselves in a similar situation as they uttered exactly the same statement.

Where is God? Where is God? I'm perhaps asking the question today, can God still do what he used to do?

Is his power now limited? Is mankind now able to look after himself because of all the advances he's made without any need of God? Is his human race now so advanced in technology and in medicine, in science and in different forms of exploration? Are we so advanced now? Are we looking after ourselves?

[2 : 30] Have we reached that point where the human race doesn't actually need God now? Does it look like his power is limited? Does it look like his hand is shortened that it cannot save?

Well, Isaiah's response here is as relevant to us today as it was to the people that he was speaking to directly at that time.

God's arm is not shortened that it cannot save, and God's ear is not dull that it cannot hear. God's ear is not dull that it cannot save, and God's ear is not dull that it cannot save, and God's ear is not dull that it cannot save, we need to focus on the greatness of God and not the greatness of man.

And the chapter is broken down into three particular sections. The first section from verse 1 down to verse 8, we're given a list of the sins of the people.

And then from verse 9 to verse 16, we see the people are listening to Isaiah, and they repent of their sins, they come to that point of repentance.

[3 : 42] And then thirdly, from verse 16 onwards, we see God's provision and God's solution for the situation. You know, when we think of the book of Isaiah, and as we look at what's written here, our first thoughts about this prophecy of Isaiah will most likely be about his marvelous prophecies of the Messiah and the glory of God's future kingdom.

And that's a prevailing theme throughout this whole prophecy of Isaiah. And it's fascinating to study these passages, and then go to the New Testament, and to see those things fulfilled in the coming of Christ, and in his suffering, in his dying, and his exaltation to the right hand of God the Father, as is recorded for us in the New Testament.

But there are also other things in the prophecy of Isaiah that demand our attention. And one thing is this, that God has given Isaiah the responsibility of telling the people about their sin.

And Isaiah does this in some detail here. He does it in chapter 1, and then he comes back to that theme in various places in his book.

And he, one of the, if you look through chapter 58, you can see how Isaiah there lists the sin to the people and tells them about the provision that he's going to speak about here in chapter 59.

[5 : 26] And one of the best statements of this is found in Isaiah 58 in chapter 1, where he's saying, So he's speaking primarily here to the people of Israel.

In chapter 59 here, God is speaking here through Isaiah, and he wants to focus our attention on what he has to say. And we know that because it begins with this word, Behold, whenever we see that word, we've been told, don't be distracted by anything else.

Don't pay attention to anything else, but listen carefully to what I have to say. Behold, he says, the Lord's hand is not shortened.

So the first thing that Isaiah teaches us here is that there is no weakness or inability on the part of God at all.

Behold, the Lord's arm is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. God has no fault. God has no weakness.

[6 : 41] God has no handicap. The problem is not that his hand is too short to reach us. The problem is not that his ear is too heavy to be able to hear us.

The problem is man and sin. The problem is the people's tragic weakness due to their choice to sin. And that's described by Isaiah, beginning here in verse 2. He says, but your iniquities have separated you from your God.

And he says, your sins have hidden his face from you, so he will not hear. The problem is not that God cannot work marvelously.

The problem is not that God cannot hear or that he is deaf. The problem is, we're told here, he will not hear. And Isaiah then goes on to tell us why.

[7 : 39] God will not hear. He will not hear because of their iniquities and their sins. You see, the people have walked away from the Lord.

They've walked away from following the Lord and they've walked into sin. And they're transgressing and being disobedient before the Lord. That distance between God and the people has been created by man.

It's been created by man's sin. Isaiah, who so often speaks words of great comfort and encouragement, we see here that he could also confront his hearers with their sins and make them face up to unpleasant spiritual and moral facts about the way they're living their lives.

And we then see that he begins to lead the people away from blaming God. God because Isaiah is very specific in identifying their sins here.

And he lists the sins here in these verses down to verse 8. And he lists the violence that they're committing and the lying and the lack of integrity that they have.

[9 : 09] And they had no shame and they were guilty of injustice in so many ways and so on and so forth. He lists these sins and he speaks to the people because they were outwardly religious but inwardly they were sinful and they were holding on to this lifestyle.

The people there, they were really anticipating some form of divine intervention into their lives and they were praying for it but their lifestyle did not reflect what God required of them.

And the people then began to doubt God and particularly his ability to save. And they began to doubt if he still had the same power as he showed with their ancestors all through the years.

And these were unjustified charges against God and very serious charges that they were laying against God. But Isaiah challenges this head on.

And I suppose it's very similar to the way that we are ourselves today. So many people doubting God's ability, so many people doubting, can God do the same as he did even 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago when these revivals were happening throughout our island and in other places throughout Scotland, throughout the nation, when we were truly a God-fearing nation.

[10 : 50] Can God bring us back from where we are right now? Many people asking these things. And why is God not listening to me personally when I'm praying to him and crying out to him?

Is it for the same reason perhaps that you're not living your life as he ought to be living it in the light of God's word? Well, Isaiah challenges all these things to the people, and he does it face to face with them.

And he makes this accusation, and he says, your iniquities are causing separation with God, and your sins, they are causing alienation.

See, it's all about the people. Just as it is so often, it's all about us. That perhaps even those who are the Lord's people, for a while, they may turn away from God, and they may start following some kind of route of sin, and then wondering why God won't come back to them, and then wondering

why God will not come back into their lives and listen to their prayers.

It's the same with the people in Isaiah's day. God requires us to walk and to live in the light of his word. So Isaiah says to them, you see, it's not just your sin, but it's also you, the sinner, it's about you.

[12:31] You're the one who is causing the Lord to turn his face away from you. This is what's causing offence to the Lord, that the people were following sin.

Isaiah says, God certainly can hear you, but he will not hear you. He's not going to hear you just now. He's totally rolling out the possibility of hearing you and answering your prayer while you carry on like this.

And he makes it very personal, Isaiah, doesn't he? He says, it's because of your sin, it's because of your iniquity, that's why your God will not hear you.

your sin, your iniquity, and you. That's how personal Isaiah has made it. And what's the extent of this problem?

The whole person is affected. The whole person, thoughts and words and actions, and isn't that what happens with sin? When we give in to sin, it takes over in our thoughts, in our speaking, in what we do, and how we live our lives.

[13:51] And God is stating this case here through Isaiah. And it's almost like a prosecuting lawyer would state the case and would make the accusation, highlighting the way the people have been, and it's a stinging indictment against them.

Because it's not just the individual that's affected here. We're told in the passage here that the whole community has been affected.

That that sin that stems from one or two or three people, it starts spreading. And it starts spreading its way through society in general. What a picture we have of our society today.

Sin that begins in one or two or three people, and when the other right contacts, my word, how it spreads. And we can see that in Britain. We can see that in Scotland. We can even see it in the Western Isles, in our communities.

This is a timeless picture we have here from the prophecy of Isaiah. The sin is infectious. What the word tells us here is it's like it's giving birth. It's reproducing on such a scale that it's difficult to stop.

[15:05] And that's the great dividing gap between man and God, this cloud of sin. That's what causes the separation. The relationship with God is broken because of sin.

This personal sin that has spread through the community with a sense of right and wrong, we start losing that pretty fast, don't we?

A modern picture, as we live in our communities, even here in the Western Isles, in the town of Stornoway itself as well, where so many people have no word of God, they don't know God, they don't really care about God.

People doing what they want and individuals and groups just demanding their own rights and totally ignoring moral guidance from the Bible. This picture Isaiah gives us, it really speaks of every generation, doesn't it?

and in Romans 3, Paul uses words from here and he speaks there of people, of human beings, that there is none righteous, not even one.

[16:27] And he goes on in Romans 3, Paul, to list so many faults that we have as human beings. And Paul points out that even by following the law, we cannot make ourselves right before God because we cannot keep the law perfectly.

It's only by faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice at Calvary. so the problem is the people and individuals and not any lack of power or perception on God's part.

And we see secondly from verse 9 down to 16 how the people repent they're brought to that place where they acknowledge the hopelessness of their situation and their own personal guiltiness as individuals and as a community because of sin before God.

And the people who are accused in the earlier verses they now begin to face up to their responsibilities they face up to their sin and the consequences of their sin.

And this is a very vivid picture that we're given here of the consequences and realization of rebellion against God and not following God's word.

[17:47] it's very often easier to blame God for things that go wrong in our lives. Very much easier to blame God than perhaps to take a good long hard look at ourselves personally.

And this is the point Isaiah has put into the people. And he won't allow for anything to be said against God in any way. And it's like Isaiah pulls away the mask that's over the people with a devastating directness.

And he holds up the mirror so that they can see themselves as they really are in the light of God's word. That's what he's done in these first set of verses of the chapter.

And there's the sad condition that people get themselves into through this crooked path of sin. And the people come to that point, our sins testify against us for our transgressions are with us.

And as for our iniquities, they say we know them. The prophet is so clear about all of this that God is not a problem.

[19 : 09] Man is, the people are. they're brought to this place where they acknowledge their need of God again. And also to realize that God really does have the ability to save them and to look after them.

An acknowledgement of the problem of sin. They acknowledge this personally. And it's a wonderful place to be when we're brought to that point of acknowledging the way that we are.

The kind of people we are. And the way that we're living our lives and realizing it's wrong. And we need to come to that place of repentance. What a wonderful place it is.

Repenting of our sin. And telling God that it's God that we need. Clinging to Jesus because he alone is righteous. Just realizing that you need Christ's forgiveness.

And realizing that you need to be in a personal and saving relationship with him. Only he alone is the answer. It's such a wonderful place to be to be crying out to God for mercy.

[20 : 27] Accepting Christ's sacrifice at Calvary as your one and only basis for salvation. And pleading to God for his grace to infuse into your life and to take over your life.

See, God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And that's why he holds out his offer of salvation to every single man and woman and boy and girl once again today.

And that's why as we look now from verse 16 onwards we see God's provision and God's solution to the problem.

We're told that the Lord saw it. God looked and he saw that there was no one to intervene on their behalf. Earlier in the history of this nation Israel, there were intercessors men chosen by God, men like Moses and Joshua and David.

But with these people now that Isaiah is writing about in that particular time we're told that God saw no intercessor. And then we're told here God then acted.

[21 : 53] God acted. And we're told that God himself will intervene. And we're told that the Redeemer will come. In verse 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. This doesn't mean that God has arms and legs. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal.

We believe that. But this is what's spoken of here. When we speak about God's arms, God's arm here, it's a metaphor. It's a metaphor to describe how God is acting.

And it's an example of God using his arm. And his arm is a symbol of power. power. And it's a symbol of power that reaches into the affairs of men and women.

When the Bible refers to the arm or to the hand of the Lord, it consistently speaks about the Son, about Jesus, as God reaches into the earth to do his work, his saving work.

[23 : 14] And that's what we believe from this. God acts in response to their repentance. And he sees that they are unable to fix the problem themselves.

And this is God's justice. And the picture we're given then is powerful. Because we see God girding himself for battle like a warrior.

And he's offering salvation. We're told that he garnered himself for righteousness. We're told that he put on the helmet of salvation. He put on the garments of vengeance and he wrapped himself in zeal like a cloak.

That's what we're told here. So we have righteousness and we have salvation and we have vengeance and we have zeal. The first two, righteousness and salvation, they relate to the deliverance of his people.

and the second two, the last two, vengeance and zeal, they relate to the punishment of the enemies of his people, those who are unbelievers.

[24 : 23] God's righteousness emphasizes also, as we're told here, his faithfulness to his covenant with his people. and the seal that's spoken of here, it highlights the intense concern that God has for every single one of his people and the love that he has for them.

And we're told that he's going to save his people and he's going to judge his enemies. That's what we're told in the passage here. God's putting on his armor for battle and he's telling us he's not going to stand by and let his people be destroyed at any cost.

And we're given a picture of him here moving almost step by step into this battle. And we ask the question then, how is it that God can come?

How can God redeem? How can God pay the price? It's because he sends his representative, the redeemer, the mediator.

Just like an envoy is sent to other countries to represent a particular nation. So God sends his envoy, someone to intervene on earth and someone to stand in between God and the people.

[25 : 45] He sent his son to stand in between himself and us. Isaiah tells us in that great chapter 53 verse 53 at the beginning.

He says, who has believed what they heard from us? And he asks, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? And he goes on then to speak of the suffering saviour, that wonderful, wonderful explanation we have by the prophet Isaiah of an event that's to happen 800 years later in the coming of Christ.

Christ. He is the arm of the Lord. He is the right hand of God. God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ comes into this world on his rescue mission.

He is God's right arm. He is God's right hand. And that right hand, it is full of power. This is Christ the Messiah who has come to this earth.

scripture tells us that the son of man came to give his life as a ransom for many. And what a picture Isaiah gives us here of Jesus.

[27 : 07] And what a witness of God's awesome love for each and every one of his people. Our Lord Jesus Christ who paid the price so that his people, his chosen people, can now come back to God through him by repenting of their sins and believing in all that his sacrifice has obtained for them.

Through his sacrifice at Calvary, the shackles of sin have now been broken and the opportunity is there for every single one of us to be set free from the bondage of sin that just so easily wraps itself around us.

And there is no situation too dark or too deep that the Lord's sacrifice at Calvary will not deal with. He has made the provision. He is the provision, our Lord Jesus Christ. And only Jesus offers this to you.

It's all of his grace and it's my faith in his finished work on that cross at Calvary. You need to trust Jesus, we all do, to cry out to him in sincerity, to plead for much needed mercy, and to pray for that grace of God to be in our lives, and to plead that he will bring each and every one of us into that personal and living relationship with him in Jesus Christ.

[28 : 58] That's what the people were offered through the powerful right hand of God. That's what we are offered today as well. That's the power of the gospel for everyone.

That's the power of God unto salvation. salvation, and it's all portrayed in his love, God's love, God's long suffering, God's mercy, God's compassion towards us who are sinners.

That sin has the same effect today as it did in the time of Isaiah. It separates us from God. God and when a nation or a people turn from God, they turn to lies.

There's no covering, there's no atonement, there's no solution to this problem. The only solution to the problem corporately and individually is our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's the only answer, the only solution, and the only Savior. contrary to what others may say, the scriptures are very clear.

[30 : 16] Jesus himself said, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one shall come to the Father except through me. And we see this chapter that began with the picture of a nation and people who were so utterly depraved because of sin.

How it moves to this glorious climax that highlights the grace of God and the love of God. Where is God?

Isaiah emphatically proclaims here that God has lost none of his power. God's covenant with his people, it stands firm and always will do. Take encouragement.

If your life is not the way it ought to be with the Lord, if you are a believer are not in the right place, God's covenant stands firm with you no matter what. But Isaiah says and the word says turn back to him and then he will hear, then he will be with you.

To those of you who are still out of Christ, it's very clear, go to Christ, plead for mercy, plead that he'll come into your life safely. That's the message that we're given here.

[31 : 26] God has the victory in Christ over sin and over death. we're asked to accept Christ for who he is and for what he's done and for what he promises to do for each and every one of his own people to search for him and to use all the means that are available to us.

The wall of sin that we create between us and God cannot be destroyed by anyone except Jesus. The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world.

You see, this prophet Isaiah, he was faithful to carry out his mission and to tell the people of the exact situation, to declare the sins of the people, but he didn't stop there.

He also spoke of this great Redeemer who is to come, the great mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ. God is willing and God is able.

Don't ever be led to think that it's more difficult for God to save you today than it would have been before. His grace, his mercy, his love is there and he holds out his hand to you today, saying, come to me, all of you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[32 : 55] Behold, God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that he cannot hear. Let's pray. Lord, we consider your word today so thankful that you don't leave us in their own situation of sin, so thankful for your provision, so thankful for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bless us and be with us, we pray, as we move out into another week. May it be that each one of us in here would be able to walk that walk of life in Jesus Christ.

O Lord, encourage your people, and we pray that you will walk marvelously in those who may be here who are still light of Christ. O bless us, we don't deserve it, Lord, we plead your blessing, and we pray that in all that's said, and all that's done, that it will be to the glory of your name alone.

Amen. Well, we'll conclude our service this morning, and we'll sing from Sing Psalms again, and Psalm 88, Psalm 88, and we'll sing the verses marked 14 to 19, 14 down to the end of the Psalm. It's on page 107 of the Blue Psalm books, page 107. Turn to us, O God Almighty, look and see from heaven above, tend this vine your hand has planted, and the son you raised in love, and so on.

[34 : 45] Verses 14 to the end of the Psalm, to God's praise. verse 14 to 107. or the son you raised in love.

See you, minecoth, and a whaler, and his branches burned with fire.

You re-heard, God's crushed, your people, and they perished in your eyes.

Let your hand be placed in blessing on the man at your right hand, on the son of man you've chosen, whom alone you've caused to stand.

Then we will not wander from you, turning from you to our shame.

[36 : 21] Strengthen us, we hide and heal us, then we'll call upon your name.

Come on us, Lord God Almighty, let us hear your glory bright.

Turn us once again towards you, come and see us, give us light.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with each one of you now and always.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 21] Amen. Amen.