

Spiritual Adulterers

Book of Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 57:4,5

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If you will, look with me in your Bibles again to Isaiah 57. My text today is from verse 3 down to verse 14 and pretty much the same topic, subject as we introduced last time about what it is to be a spiritual adulterer. Last time, we looked at this of what it was to be an adulterous generation. Bob just read it in Mark 8. It was a judgment that the Lord himself brought against his generation and a very serious one and here again in Isaiah's day, we find this particular charge being leveled against the people of Israel. So I'll read this portion and we'll probably deal with this again next time. This is an important chapter, I believe, for us to weigh prayerfully. But here in verse 3 of Isaiah 57, the Lord summons these. He says,

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and [or even] the whore. 4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, 5 Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks? 6 Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot: even to them hast thou poured a drink offering, thou hast offered a meat offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7 Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. 8 Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance: for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it. 9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. 10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. 11 And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12 I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee. 13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me

shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.

As you can see, this portion of Scripture addresses those among Israel, the nation of Israel, whom God accuses of being spiritual adulterers as the word states there in verse 3, even the seed of the whore. I know these are pretty succinct terms and yet were it not important, I don't believe the Lord would have put it so succinctly. It's here in these brazen words that it might be forever branded in our minds and our hearts of what it is to be a spiritual adulterer. I venture to say that in our generation most people do not know themselves to be spiritual adulterers. Even now in this hour when many are gathered in their places of worship, they don't consider that they are as children born out of wedlock because that's what it is to be the seed of an adulterer, the seed of a whore. That is a stigma that a child will bear all of his lifetime, the fact that they were born of a whore, and that can't be changed. That's who they are.

That's what they are and it's how the Lord describes really false professors. When you consider what he says in verse 4, "are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood?" He's speaking here to ones who would claim that based upon their works or claim that based upon their profession or something they did or a prayer they said or according to them, their good walk and personal obedience before God, that their sins are forgiven. They would claim to be children of God and yet the Lord says, "are ye not children of transgression?" Much like Cain who came with an offering and yet did not come with a blood sacrifice and the Lord told him, "Sin lies at your door." In other words, if Christ himself has not put away your sin, you are not of the seed of the righteous.

You are yet in your sin and you are children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, because any false hope is a falsehood. Everybody has a hope of heaven. We all work around a bunch of religious people and professing Christians who profess a hope of heaven and do so glibly and yet when you get down to talking with them very succinctly about where that hope lies, you have to come away and say that it is a seed of falsehood and they don't like to be told that, but that's the language of Scripture.

One might study the history of idolatry in the nations around Israel. You see, this is why I'm introducing it this way, so that in our minds and hearts, we're clear about this. Many times when the question of idolatry comes up, you automatically start thinking of out there, but even as children of the Lord truly so, we'd have to acknowledge that it's what we are by nature, idolaters. Just the simple truth in Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way." So were God to judge us on the same basis, we'd have to say that's what we are and yet the Scriptures say, "but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." That's the only difference. I know my nature and I trust that you know yours, that were God to judge me based upon who I am, I'd have to be judged with these very same idolaters because that's my nature. That's who I am.

So we see this strong language being described here and I want us to consider this because this is a vital warning for professing Christians today. I often make that distinction. Professing Christians, all who profess Christ in any manner are professing Christians but that doesn't make them Christian. That doesn't make them the Lord's. There are many who would profess to be saved and that way is broad, that way is wide, and yet the bottom line question that has to be asked is: is it true faith or is it idolatry?

If you look with me just over in 1 John 5 at a particular portion of Scripture, 1 John 5, John was very pointed in his message to those of his day, much as any who truly are messengers of Christ will be. Whenever the Lord sends a messenger forth to proclaim a message, it is not with obscurity. It's not in confusion. It's with plainness of speech and declaring things as they are and certainly we find that here in 1 John 5 beginning with verse 17, he says, "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." Now, there is a whole message just in that one verse. If all unrighteousness is sin, how can it be said then that there is a sin not unto death? Well, in Scripture in the New Testament, unrighteousness is what man does for righteousness; what he attempts to do to please God. That's unrighteousness. It's not a righteousness at all but men consider it, and yet there is a sin not unto death. I'd have to say that I left to myself am unrighteous and yet in Christ, that sin debt has been paid so even though I am a sinner and I sin, it is not unto death because Christ has paid the debt. But it all comes back to Christ and who he is.

Verse 18, John says, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." Now, you'd have to understand the context here because at the beginning of his epistle he said, "He that saith he hath not sin makes God a liar and the truth is not in him," so you might think, "Is John contradicting himself here?" No, but when he says, "whosoever is born of God sinneth not," you go back in the context of his epistle and he's talking about those who depart from the faith, sin in departing from the faith. So simply put, we know that whosoever is born of God cannot depart from the faith. Those whom Christ has redeemed and the Spirit called cannot leave Christ to go back into perdition. It's impossible. They cannot return to their former religion as a dog returns to his vomit or a pig to its sty, as Peter describes in his epistle. That's not the characteristic.

Now, we're all sinners just like in verse 17, but there is a sin not unto death. He's talking here about a death, an eternal death, an eternal condemnation, which is the portion of those who aren't the Lord's and you have to ask yourself, "Why am I not going down that path? Why am I not following the majority, the masses of those that profess to be Christians today?" It's because the Lord himself has made a difference and that's what we're going to see in these verses, 1. being born of God. Born from above. His Spirit being within us as sinners but our debt being paid of Christ, we cannot, we can fall, we can wander, but we are not of those the writer of the Hebrews says that fall back into perdition. Impossible.

So here, "he that is begotten of God," in verse 18, "keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Those that are begotten of God keep themselves. Now, that doesn't mean that there are keepings of us, but the idea of keeping is that they are watchful and if we've been

taught of God, we take warning from Scripture seriously knowing our own nature, knowing how if God ever, and he wouldn't if we're his, but if he ever took his hand off of us, we'd be flat on our face in front of a totem pole or we would be worshiping trees and rocks and rivers as many do in some of these idolatrous countries. But, whoa, wait a minute, what about even in some of these congregations that preach up man's will, free will, man's works? It's all about man exalting man. We would still be there in worship were it not for him keeping us.

So when it says here in verse 18, "he that is begotten of God keepeth himself," that means they are watchful. The Spirit gives them a discernment. Proverbs says, "Keep the heart for out of it are the issues of life." There is an understanding of when you're hearing leaven. You're not as you were before where it was leaven and you didn't know it, now there is a perception. There is an ear to hear. "And that wicked one toucheth him not," in the sense of taking him back into perdition. Christ said of Peter, "Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat but I have prayed for you." That's the only difference between Peter and Judas, the fact that Christ prayed for him. Christ was his substitute. Christ was keeping him. Christ paid his debt and Judas he gave over to his own reprobate mind. The wicked one can oppress us. The wicked one can accuse us. The wicked one can attack us. But the wicked one cannot have us. The wicked toucheth him not because Christ has paid the debt.

So verse 19, John says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." He's simply saying that God has made a difference and, again, Paul writing to the Corinthians asked them, "Who maketh thee to differ?" There is nothing in this as we look at this distinction of what it is to be the Lord's versus being a spiritual adulterer. There is nothing in us that we can ever take credit for or glory in. He says, "we know that we are of God." If we're children of God, God gets all the glory. That's what it is to be born again, born from above. "And the whole world lies in wickedness." In other words, we would be in that world of wickedness were it not for the grace of God, that distinguishing grace of God.

Then verse 20, "We know." Do you notice that in each one of these verses it's something we know? If you've been taught to know something, it means you've been taught it. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, departs not from Christ and him crucified, that's verse 18. Verse 19, "we know that we are of God." If we're his, we're of him. We didn't birth ourselves. We didn't set ourselves apart, but we're of him, that's his grace, verse 19. But then verse 20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." That confirms what John wrote in John 17, "that they might know thee, the eternal God."

Eternal life is to know him, and we know that the Son of God is come. Not just that he is come, but who is come and why he came and what he accomplished for sinners. There is very specific truth, not truths but truth, in that statement, "we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding." That word "understanding" is in the sense of discernment. Why would we need discernment? We were talking about it back with the

men just before our time of worship. You'll run into many people today that say Jesus is Christ and they'll say a man can't say that he is Lord except it be by the Spirit so they go about calling him Lord. It's a profession, but even in that, particularly in that, we need discernment because when you break it down, which Christ? Describe him? Who he is but what he accomplished is vital in our understanding. Not just that he came but why he came and for whom he came and what he accomplished and where he is now.

This is fundamental to the truth and even there, you pick up leaven because you hear people talking about the truths of grace of the truths with regard to Christ. "I am the way, the truth," is what he said. You'll never find the word "truth" in the plural in Scripture. It's always the truth, and even here it says, "we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God," singular, pointed, distinctive concerning Christ.

But look how John wraps this all up because the best way to see how a stick is crooked is to lay a straight one down next to it. When we talk about idolatry, what is it? Well, we've just laid the straight stick down. Truth is everything that pertains to the Lord Jesus Christ and his death and what he accomplished as revealed here in this word. Period. Anything that is contrary to it, opposed to it or different from it, altered from it, is idolatry and that's why John says here, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Now, you notice "idol" is in the plural. There's not just one. Idols can be anything in this heart that a man puts up as a rival to the Lord Jesus Christ and John says, "Keep yourselves from those things." Any self-glory, any self-righteousness, any pride of grace. Even any looking to graces for evidence that somehow I'm the Lord's can be an idol because it's got your eyes off of Christ. Christ said, "I am the vine." That's where the life is. "Ye are the branches." Branches are passive. Even fruit is passive. Why would we ever become a fruit inspector and weigh fruit? No, if we're anything, Christ said, "Without me you are nothing and you can do nothing." So it doesn't take much when you take the light of the Gospel and the Scripture and put it on these hearts of ours to have to cry out to the Lord once again for mercy because we are idolaters by nature but for his grace, but for his keeping.

So that being said, come back here to Isaiah 57 and we'll get as far as we can but I went down through this chapter and put this simple little outline to kind of guide us and we'll not get through it all today but in verse 4, we see that spirit that is within spiritual idolaters, that spirit. Verse 4 is where we see the root of that adultery, what it is to be a spiritual adulterer. It's rooted within us. Thirdly, in verse 5 through 9, we see the characteristics and that's where we'll probably spend most of our time next time, the characteristics of what it is to be a spiritual adulterer. Verses 10 through 11, the effects of being a spiritual adulterer. There we see in verse 10 the hardness of the heart instead of repentance. In verse 11, we see the fear of man as being more important than the fear of God. These are all signs of what it is to be a spiritual adulterer, but finally in verse 12 through 14, the judgment of God versus all who are spiritual adulterers.

Here in verse 4, the spirit within spiritual adulterers. Look at it with me. He asks the question, and this is the Lord, "Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?" as in the sense of mockery. God is not

mocked. Men make a mockery of God but God is not mocked. He says, "are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood?" So we see here the spirit within spiritual adulterers but we also see the root when he says, "are ye not children of transgression and a seed of falsehood?" "Against whom do ye sport yourselves?" That word "sport" means "to mock or to deride one."

If you will, look back in Judges 16. We have an example here of how this is used with regard to Samson. Samson was the Lord's prophet in the day and being a man, he fell. He was taken by the Philistines and this word is used here in Judges 16:25 where it says, "And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport." In other words, that he might make us laugh; that we might have a few light moments with him; toy with him. "And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport." In other words, as much as they did our Lord Jesus Christ when they blindfolded him and then smote him and would have him say who smote him. Made sport when they put that crown of thorns on his head. They were making sport of our Lord.

It says, "they set Samson between the pillars." Then down in verse 27, "Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport." That's the word that is used over here, "Against whom do ye sport yourselves?" You know, what men call worship today is nothing but making sport. Entertainment is the order of the day with regard to places of worship, in fact, even the false message that preachers stand up and declare today, they know that none would really come hear them unless they had some good singers, some good music, some good programs and other things going on behind them.

I remember saying that to a gentleman that attends a congregation here in Shreveport where they are known for their programs and other things and I asked him one day, I said, "Take away all of that stuff and just put that man up there, would you really go hear him?" He said, "Absolutely not." The reason he went was because his wife plays the piano, accompanies the music, and he has some part in leading the music and they've got all the latest technology with the big screen tv and the words on the PowerPoint up behind and the choirs and the music, but he admitted it. Take all that away, they wouldn't come and hear the man that supposedly was there as the preacher, in fact, they don't want to hear him that long anyway. That's why so much of the time is given to the music and to the performance and production and all that and they tell the preacher, "Be short. We just need a little ten minute pick-up speech."

All of that, dear friends, is nothing but making sport and the Lord here through Isaiah doesn't mince words. Notice the word "against whom do ye sport yourselves?" If people in religion today could hear the wails of men in hell crying out in rebellion, the reality having struck that all of their worship and times of worship were actually against God and against his Son for which they gathered, it wouldn't convert them but it would be an astounding testimony against what goes on today. Is not this the spirit of antichrist? Is not any such sporting? Again, it's the very spirit that is within spiritual adulterers. Men don't

come to hear of Christ being exalted and honored in places of worship today. It's the furthest thing from their mind. They carry their Bibles. They give lip profession, if you will, to God and to his Son, but to truly sit as you're doing and to spend even a half an hour of hearing a message that does nothing but exalt the Lord Jesus Christ, they have not got the time of day.

Recently someone spoke to me about some of these even radio broadcasts that are 30 minutes long, very succinct, and they gave this one particular person for which they were burdened some of these broadcasts to listen to and the response of the person they gave them to was, "Wow, those are long messages." Thirty minutes to sit quietly and to hear of Christ being exalted. Now, to us, that's our bread. That's our joy. But it's God that has made it so, but it is so contrary to what men and women are used to and unless the Lord is pleased to teach them, they're going to get up and go down the road and find a place where they are entertained, where it is sport, because they have in them that very spirit of adultery and in Isaiah's time it abounded.

When you go back and just read about the history of the abominable idolatries that were introduced into Israel and were encouraged by some of the wicked kings such as Ahaz and even Manasseh of whom later it was discovered that he was the Lord's and the Lord brought him to repentance. But the idolatries which they encouraged as leaders and it's one thing that I'll say that that's who's promoting it in our day. Idolatry is in men's hearts but there are preachers a dime a dozen that are willing to give people what they want to hear and bring in and put in place those things that are distractions to the message of Christ and that which exalts the Lord. It's not that they don't read the Scriptures. They'll open up this word and that, in itself, is what deceives so many because they'll say of that preacher, "Well, we read the Scriptures and that preacher, he'll talk of Christ." Well, there are people that have a good handle on this word as far as the word and they'll profess that it's the word of God, but they're ignorant of the God of the word, the Christ of the word.

The preachers are the ones that continue to direct and lead people in the way that they would go and so it was even in Isaiah's day and there are some things that are described here concerning this spirit of idolatry that we'll look at next time but just introduce in verse 5, "Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree." If you'll notice the places that are mentioned here in these verses that I read for you, you've got idolatry in every way. Verse 5, under every green tree. In verse 6, by the streams. Verse 7, on the mountain tops. Verse 8, behind closed doors. That pretty much covers it.

We've all seen documentaries of people that are addicted to drugs and will do anything to get a drug, even dig through trash to try to find some remaining drug that they can shoot up with and take. This is the Lord's condemnation of people who are spiritual adulterers by nature and wherever they turn, they will turn it to idolatry. Whether it be under the green tree, whether it be by the river with the smooth stones, whether it be on a high and lofty mountain, whether it be behind closed doors, idolatry. And we see it in our generation. It doesn't take much to drive through a city, much as Paul did on Mars Hill, where there were monuments devoted to all kinds of gods. I suppose if you just for one day drove through Shreveport, LA with a legal pad and everywhere you turned,

everywhere you found some sort of religious monument or symbol of supposed Christianity and you noted the location, you'd fill a whole pad full and more. It's what people do. They place their religion in various places: under the green tree; and by the way; by the river; on the lofty mountains.

I can remember when this huge cross on the edge of the city was dedicated and that was a big deal. Putting up a big cross and putting it on a place where supposedly they used to hang people and now they were claiming that spot back for the Lord. There is a place out there every Sunday night you can go and there is a concert. That's all they've got is concerts. People come. People are being entertained. These are just modern day methods that people use but it's still the same idolatry. It's still the same idolatry.

Here, "Enflaming yourselves." It speaks of being devotedly fond of these things and if you don't think people are fond of them, try to take them away. Try to tell them it's an idol. "Here, let me just take that off the wall," because it says "behind the doors." That's where people like to have it. When you walk into a house, look around. The religious symbols all over. But, "Let me just take those away from you and let me burn them," and you'll see just how fond people are, literally mad upon their idols. If you look in Jeremiah 50:38, you'll see this language. I know our time is gone but that's the language that the Lord uses. In Jeremiah 50:38, "A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols." They are enflamed. It's the unnatural lusting. That's that spirit of adultery for these things. Mad upon their idols.

They worship their god under very green tree and every place they can, all the while doing what? Coming back to Isaiah 57:4 they, "make wide their mouth, and draw out the tongue." In other words, mocking the very messengers of Christ, those who would, for their good, point them to Christ as needy sinners. They prefer their sport and their merriment to the seriousness and the truthfulness of what it is to be a guilty lost sinner before a holy God.

There is a lot more that can be said here but verse 4, the root of all this lies within them. "Are ye not children of transgression?" This goes back to being sons of Adam. "A seed of falsehood." Everything within us is antichrist as we're born in this world and it's only as the Spirit of God by his grace is pleased to take these otherwise wicked and idolatrous hearts and turn them toward the Lord Jesus Christ that we'll ever worship him in truth. But I'm thankful that if the Lord has so taught you, that there are those that he has been pleased to save out of this wicked and adulterous generation and draw to his Son. Who are they? Those that God himself has purposed to save in his grace and for whom Christ came and paid that great debt. But all others, this is how it describes them. There is not different denominations, you're either in Christ or you're not. You're either of his grace or you're not. He either paid your debt or he didn't. You're either a true worshiper or you're an idolater. That's how the Scriptures set it forth.