

God's Righteous Judgment

Book of Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 59:16-18

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Please look with me in your Bibles to Isaiah 59. This is such a rich chapter that we're taking it in small portions and endeavoring to see every part, every verse as it pertains to the glory of Christ and the salvation of his people. Wonderful pictures here, forward looking to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to read from verse 16 down to verse 21, although we'll probably not get much further than verse 19 and I want to speak to you about "The Righteous Judgment of God." The righteous judgment of God. Verse 16,

16 And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. 18 According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompence. 19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. 20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. 21 As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

It is a simple but consistent truth that we find throughout the whole of Scripture. If someone were to ask me, "Put the entire Bible into a sentence or two, what it's about." I believe that it could simply be stated that salvation is the work of God. Certainly in verse 16 we see that, "he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor," among men. People talk today about, "Why doesn't God just leave men to their own free will?" Well, to do so would be to condemn all of us because in our fallen nature, none of us would seek God. None of us would be burdened for our own sin. None of us would intercede, particularly on behalf of another, but even for ourselves. We wouldn't know how it would be that we could satisfy a just and holy God.

So verse 16, that we saw last time is, "he." When you see that little word, "therefore," ask yourself: what is the therefore there for. It's a conclusion. "Therefore," because there is no man, "therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." So if had to boil it down into that sentence it would be this: salvation is the work of God and that he it is that has ordained that salvation for sinners that he has purposed to save. This is his salvation. It's not in man's hands, it's in God's hands. And yet in order for him to save, you can see there, "therefore his arm brought salvation unto him." Now, you could read that that his arm brought salvation unto man, but read it in the sense of God's arm brought salvation unto him. God needed a savior in order to save. In order for him to be just and justified, it required him providing that savior. Just like Abraham said to Isaac when they went up on the mountain and Isaac said, "I see the wood, I see the fire, but where is the sacrifice?" And Abraham, by the revelation of the Spirit, said to Isaac, "God will provide himself a sacrifice." That has several meanings. It could mean that God will provide himself a sacrifice, which he did. God will provide himself that sacrifice, in other words, he would provide that sacrifice, which he did in his Son, but don't forget the most important part: God would provide himself as that sacrifice. He being that sacrifice. He being that one who would come in the flesh and pay the debt and that's that righteousness of verse 16 which was necessary.

Salvation was not completed because God decreed it from heaven or from eternity. Salvation was completed when it was worked out, when he came and that righteousness was earned and established and worked out. And so thorough was the work of Christ in obedience unto death that when he finished the work, there remained nothing but righteousness to put to the account of those for whom he died. That's a good message for sinners whom the Lord teaches. So that's the sum of it.

Now, the imagery that we have here in verses 17 through 19 is that of a warrior arming himself for war and going forth on a mission of justice and recompense against the enemies of his people. A lot of people think that we need to show pictures to kids to help them understand the Scriptures. No, the words themselves are an image and I would encourage you as parents to do nothing but take this word and read it to your kids and let them ponder the words. Think of a warrior, particularly in the old days, a Roman soldier type, where it describes here in verse 17, a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation, and a garment of vengeance. It says "garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." These are very picturesque words and if you could just think about what is being described here, this is someone going to war and it's a particular person because verse 17 says, "he." This is not something that he is requiring the sinner to do, but God put on righteousness as a breastplate and God put on an helmet of salvation upon his head.

You say, "Well, God doesn't have a body." Not until Christ came. In the book of Hebrews it says, "A body thou hast prepared for me." Why was it necessary that God become flesh? Because God cannot die, but what it would require here would be a substitute, one who would come and fight the battle and do the work and finish it on behalf of a people. You think about soldiers in our history the last ten years of the nation. There has been a

lot of focus on soldiers who have left here and gone overseas and fought and you hear a lot of talk about freedom and liberty that we enjoy because others are laying down their lives. That's what a soldier does. A soldier is a substitute on behalf of their nation. Can you see how beautiful a picture this is of Christ, the man of war who has gone forth to accomplish salvation for a people? Not just for everybody, but for his race. For that people that the Father gave him and he has done the battle and he has won the victory over our enemies. That's a beautiful picture. Soldiers go and lay down their lives for the freedom and liberty of the people but it's not the entire nation that goes. Can you imagine if wars were fought that way? Okay, everybody has got to get up and go overseas now. We're going to abandon jobs and work and everything and we're going to go. No, that's not the way it's done. Soldiers are representatives. They go and fight and they die and in that we see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, but as the just representative

Here it says, "he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke." He did it. He did it and he has gone forth and fought the battle as the captain of the salvation of his people, a nation. You say, "Who is his nation? Who is his people?" Well, sinners from every tribe, nation and tongue. But this is a language of Scripture of God as being a man of war. It goes all the way back, if you'll hold your hand here in Isaiah 59 and go all the way back to Exodus 15. Here is the first mention that we find in Scripture concerning God being as a man of war. Exodus 15 and this was the song of Moses. This is the hymn that when you get to the book of Revelation we find being typified in glory as a type of the work of Christ that he would accomplish and this was after Israel was delivered through the Red Sea from Pharaoh and his armies. There was a victory that had been won through a mediator. You remember Moses stretched forth his rod and the seas parted. All of that's a type and picture of Christ the Mediator, and the rod of strength with which he has delivered his people and himself.

But the song of Moses here in verse 1, "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Notice verse 3, "The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." Who gets the glory in salvation? If you read simply what the Scriptures say, it's the Lord. That's it. There is no sharing of his glory with sinners as if they have any part in this. He's that man of war that has gone forth to fight and has won the victory on behalf of his people.

Look in Isaiah 42. We see this theme through the Scriptures. Of course, the chapter begins, Isaiah 42 with God the Father declaring his Son to be his servant for this reason: to send him forth to conquer every enemy that stands or stood in the way of God being just to justify. You think about Satan. You think about sin. You think about the world. You think about the law. All of these were enemies against us. The law can't save. Satan certainly doesn't desire your salvation. Your sin is more than what you could ever deal with. It's not just in what you do and say but in what you think. From the top of your head to the bottom of your foot, you are one putrid sore. I am. So there is no hope of salvation

in any one of us. This world is certainly no savior. It is condemned. It is fallen. You might have a good day today but tomorrow evil will come. The Lord said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

He brings these things to pass lest we should ever put any confidence in the flesh, so all of these things are enemies against those sinners for whom Christ came so it was necessary that he, being the man of war, being the servant of God as you see in Isaiah 42:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," or to the nations. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." In other words, he didn't come to be a politician. It's like politicians run the gamut of the country making promises, "We're going to do this. We're going to do that," and the day after the election everything is just as bad or worse than it ever was. That's man. Christ did not come with slogans and politicizing. No,

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth." In other words, when his work is done, when it is complete, there will be a righteousness established equal to that of God himself. I love that, that the sinner has in the Lord Jesus Christ a righteousness equal to that of God himself. In other words, God himself approves it. To do that, every enemy has to be destroyed, has to be slain.

It says in verse 4 of Isaiah 42, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth," till this battle is won, till the victory is won, "and the isles shall wait for his law."

But look over in verse 13, again, a song. Isn't it interesting that this is another hymn in the inspired word, just like the song of Moses in Exodus 15. Here in Isaiah 42, beginning with verse 10, "Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands." Notice, "The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies." There we have a picture, again, of a victorious Deliverer and Savior.

When you come over to the New Testament then in Hebrews 2:10, we see the fulfillment of this in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2, look at verse 10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." He is the Creator. He is the sustainer. He is the provider of all things. He is the governor. But it became him and by whom are all things, "in bringing many sons unto glory, to," what? "To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." In other words, complete. When you stop and think that even before man fell there was the Savior that had been ordained to come and deliver those sinners that the Father had given him.

It's interesting the language of Scripture because the word "perfect" there in Hebrews 2:10 is actually the word "complete." He was not complete as a Savior until he had finished the work. He was not complete as a man of war, as the captain of salvation, until every one of his he had won the victory on their behalf. There was a perfecting. You say, "Well, he was perfect." Yes. As God he was perfect but as a man, this had to be worked out in his sufferings and that's what it says here, "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth," that's God is the one who sanctifies, sets it apart unto holiness, "and they who are sanctified are all of one." In other words, so complete is this victory, this work of the Lord Jesus Christ that when God looks upon those for whom he died, he doesn't see individuals in any personal obedience and righteousness of their own. No, he sees them all as sanctified by the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our perfection. He is our righteousness. "For which cause," it says there in verse 11, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren." You talk about identifying with that people that he came to save, the Lord Jesus Christ is that one.

So I believe all of this is described back here in Isaiah 59. Now, in the time that we have, I just want to focus in on his armor that we see here. It's very simply set forth. In order to accomplish this work, we see four things described here and this will probably be as far as we get today in verse 17. There is a breastplate of righteousness that he put on. There is an helmet of salvation upon his head. Thirdly, there are garments of vengeance for clothing. It's just like the old soldiers, they used to have different layers of garments that all comprised his one uniform. Then the fourth thing we see there is that cloak of zeal, it says, "and was clad with zeal as a cloke."

So let's go back and just look at these briefly in verse 17. First, the breastplate of righteousness. There is a breastplate of righteousness that our Lord Jesus Christ put on, not only as a man of war because that's what he had to do, he had to come and fulfill all righteousness, satisfy the law. Just because he was the Son of God, did not mean that God could in any way, his Father, any way withhold his hand and require less of him. No, he spared not his own Son but delivered him up. There had to be that absolute working out of righteousness as the man of war, as the captain of salvation. But when we see here of the breastplate of righteousness, it is a unique office in that he was, yes, that man of war, but he was also going forth to war as the high priest. Whenever you see "breastplate of righteousness" it's a reference back to the high priest that wore a breastplate which represented the very righteousness of God and the ephod, which hung over that, that had the names of the children of Israel written on that breastplate in various types of precious stones.

Look back with me in Leviticus 8. It's important for us to connect these Scriptures and see their connection throughout with regard to Christ. But in Leviticus 8, we can see the garments of the high priest that are described here, particularly in verses 6 through 9. There was not only the necessity of the priests, there was the necessity of the sacrifices, but there was also the garment which the priests were to wear and here in chapter 8 and verse 1 of Leviticus, "The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread; And gather thou all the congregation

together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses did as the LORD commanded him; and the assembly was gathered together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Moses said unto the congregation, This is the thing which the LORD commanded to be done. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water." There is that sanctifying, setting apart. "And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith." Then verse 8, "And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim. And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses." What a picture of the person of Christ and his work as the high priest.

So here in Isaiah 59:17, the breastplate of righteousness is an allusion to the high priestly garment. He wasn't simply a man of war, but in that function as the man of war, he came forth as the high priest. When it says there in verse 17, as we're going to see here in just a second, "he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing." A lot of people as they picture these Old Testament high priests back in the day, you've seen pictures. Everything is all pristine and clean, but think more in terms of when you go to the meat store and see that butcher with his apron behind the counter. He's around blood all day long. What happens to that garment? It gets covered with blood. It's a bloody garment. When it speaks here of "the garments of vengeance for clothing," and you read all that is described here: the fury of his adversaries in verse 18, and recompence of his enemies, this is a picture of death.

This is a picture of blood and the Scriptures say that Christ entered into the Holy of Holies not with the blood of bulls and goats, but that's what it typified. When those priests went in and out, the sanctifying washing with water, there was blood. There was blood everywhere. There was blood poured around the altar. There was blood on their garments. There was blood sprinkled on the sacrifice. You think of the putrid smell of sacrifices and burnt offerings being offered day in and day out, what that would have smelled like. It's a symbol of death and yet a savor of life to those for whom Christ came. A sweet savor unto God because to be just and justify, there had to be a just sacrifice.

Do you see that? That's this breastplate of righteousness and even as the names of the children of Israel were written on the breastplate of these high priests in the Old Testament and picture a high priest going forth to war. That's not far fetched. In Israel, they went before the altar, the mercy seat. The conquering of Jericho, they were often there in the battle. All of that is a type and picture of the Lord Jesus Christ but going forth to war for those that the Father had given Christ whose names were written on his breastplate.

Look at John 17. I know it's a familiar chapter but it's important to see it again and see it written. Christ's work was not some general work or battle that he went forth to fight in order to save as many as he could. No, there was a specific mission upon which he was sent and for which he was sent and he came and accomplished for a people, sinners,

every one whose name was written on that breastplate of righteousness. You can see here in John 17, this is his high priestly prayer before he went to the cross. Verse 1, "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven." Just think about what the name Jesus means, Savior; God in the flesh. "And lifted up his eyes to heaven," why? Because that's where satisfaction had to be made in order for God to be just and justified. "And said, Father, the hour is come," a specific hour, specific Savior, specific people, specific sacrifice, "glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." There had to be a battle fought. There had to be a victory won so glorify thy Son in this hour.

"As thou hast given him power over all flesh." You see, such a mighty captain and warrior and high priest is he that all power was given to him over all flesh to do what? Not to try to save as many as he could, but "that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." There is a specific mission, a specific people. We're talking here about the Rahabs of Scripture. We're talking here about the Davids, the Abrahams. We're talking about the Sauls of Tarsus. We're talking about, prayerfully, those of us here that though we were not there, yet the representative was there to fight the battle and to accomplish this war and to finish it.

Verse 3 says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." So he was able to say even before going to cross, verse 4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Before he went to the cross, it was necessary that he work out a perfect righteousness in his life and it's of that of which he speaks here, "I finished the work." In other words, "Look upon me, the perfect lamb about ready to be sacrificed and for that righteousness' sake, save your people when I lay down my life in death."

So we see the Lord so represented, clothed with armor and that breastplate of righteousness, paying the debt for the salvation of his people. The second thing we see in Isaiah 59:17 is the "helmet of salvation." You say, "Why a helmet of salvation?" Well, what does a helmet do? It protects the head. It protects the mind and what Christ came to accomplish was not only in deed and in word, but the very spirit of the law. You think about the mind, what was it that Satan was attempting to do in Christ's temptation there in the wilderness was get into his mind. All he saw was another man and in his mind, Satan's mind, this was like Adam. When did Adam fall? Was it when he actually partook of the fruit? No, it was when he saw along with Eve that that fruit was supposedly good for knowledge of good and evil and he took it and ate it.

Sin is born in the heart, in the mind, and yet when it says here that he took him the helmet of salvation, it's speaking there of that which protected him in this mission. Not only in the work that he came to do, his words, but his thoughts. Every aspect of his working out of this law. But also when you talk about the helmet of salvation, the soldier's helmet and you can go back and look at some of these in history how they were designed, the soldier's helmet was fascinating. It was, in many ways, a flamboyant piece of armor. Very ornate and intricate. Again, I relate this back to the high priest that wore that mitre of gold which represented what? Honor and glory. When you see troops line up, the general distinguishes himself in many ways by that helmet that he wore, by that

headdress that he wore, and it's just another way of saying here, "an helmet of salvation upon his head," a helmet of glory. In other words, the salvation belongs unto him. He's the one wearing it, not us. It's all glory and honor belong unto him and that's what distinguishes him from the rest.

The third thing that we see here, as I mentioned, are "the garments of vengeance." Again, garments designed for battle; garments that were distinguishing. I'm always impressed when I see a Marine dressed up in full parade dress. There is something about everything in order how they stand there and you think, "These are soldiers that are ready to go to battle." But all of that pales in comparison to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in those garments of salvation in which he came but were designed to be bloodied, which were designed to be covered with, if you will, the blood of his enemies. You say, "What blood?" Well, when he died, it wasn't for his sin that he died, it was for the sin of his people that was laid upon him and so his death was a bloody death.

His garments, these garments that we see here, when it speaks of "vengeance for clothing," the wages of sin is death. This is a life and death issue for which Christ came and it had to be accomplished. He had to die. He came with that purpose. Not to keep his garments of salvation unbloodied. Do you realize if he had come into this world and simply lived a perfect life and ascended into heaven there would be no salvation? All it would have proven was that he was righteous. He not only had to fulfill the principles of the law, the precepts of the law, but he had to pay the penalty. That meant getting bloodied and I believe that's the picture here that we have of vengeance, of a garment that has been dipped in blood.

That's what we see over here in Isaiah 63. Look at Isaiah 63. "Who is this that cometh from Edom," you think of Edom, it was a condemned race, "with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me," that's why smite the shepherd and the sheep scatter, "for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." There is the picture of vengeance. Christ came and went to war against every enemy of his people: sin, Satan, the world, the law that could do nothing but condemn and won the victory. That's the picture we have here of these garments of vengeance.

Then the last point, there is a lot more here, but we'll pick up with this next time, where it says "was clad with zeal as a cloke." As we saw in Isaiah 42, he would not rest until he had brought judgment unto truth. The zeal of his Father's glory and honor, of justice being satisfied, is what drove his every move and step and thought as he lived upon this earth and he did not rest until he had finished. "He set his face like a flint toward Jerusalem," Scriptures say. That's that zeal for God's glory and honor that he cloaked himself with in order to win the victory. What a beautiful picture, this righteous judgment of God, that through the work of his Son, he has saved an entire nation, that is, his people from every tribe, nation and tongue. What a glorious victory and what a glorious work.