

Isaiah 57 11-21

11 "And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken *it* to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?

12 I will declare your righteousness And your works, For they will not profit you.

13 When you cry out, Let your collection of *idols* deliver you. But the wind will carry them all away, A breath will take *them*. But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, And shall inherit My holy mountain."

14 And one shall say, "Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way, Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people."

15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy *place*, With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

16 For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls *which* I have made.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners.

19 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to *him who is far off* and to *him who is near*," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him."

20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 "*There is no peace*," Says my God, "for the wicked."

Last week we were confronted with hideousness of idolatry. It was presented to us in such a way that we **would feel** the revulsion that God feels toward His people's unfaithfulness to Him. We would **experience** it.

We talked about why God would use such graphic imagery.

Well this morning we will see God using the effects of that imagery to **mock those** who are **committed** to idolatry and to **minister to those** whose hearts are broken **due to** their idolatry.

That is essentially our outline. The passage moves freely back and forth from one topic to the other. And in it we see the beautiful New Testament version of repentance that comes from brokenness.

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11 "And of whom have you been afraid, or feared, That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken *it* to your heart? Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?"

God is about to pose to these idolaters a series of rhetorical questions. And when the questions are asked, we can see God's intent in asking them. They are all designed to show the people their sin.

We start with- **And of whom have you been afraid, or feared?**

Here we go again. **Fear and trust** have been issues all through the book of Isaiah. They are main themes. And they are main themes because they are so tied in with idolatry. Our **fears** and our **idols** are closely related. Our **trust** and our **idols** are closely related. If we **fear** something more than we fear God- we are learning about our **true** worship. If we **trust** something more than we trust God, we are learning about our **true** worship.

So God asks the people this question. **Of whom have you been afraid.** This first word for fear means of whom **have you been anxious about, preoccupied with, concerned about.** For us it would be of whom or what are we thinking about, afraid not to have, fearing to miss out on? Of what would we be anxious to not have part of our day or part of our lives? What are we anxious **to have** and driven **to think about?**

Then the next question is of whom do have reverential, deep in your bones fear about? **Who are you *in fear of* displeasing to the point you are driven to do what they want?** The first fear appears to be the fear of **loosing** what the thing of our worship **grants us.** The second appears to be the fear of what our thing of worship **will do to us** if we do not grant its wishes.

Obviously we are told by Jesus that **only God** should be the object of that second fear. And if our hearts only love God, God would be the object of that **first fear** as well. We would fear **not having Him** and we would fear **displeasing Him.**

But that is not how these people would have answered the questions if they would have had a chance to answer them. It was clear in these people's lives that their **fears** were misplaced. They had all the fears that come from false worship. And as always we are driven to look at our fears and tell the truth about them. They reveal us. Whether we want them to or not, **they do.** Trace what you **fear** to **what you love** more than God. Let fear do you some good. Follow the trail of **fear crumbs** to its source. And then do business at its source. **Wrong fears come from wrong worship. Wrong fear comes from trusting all the wrong things.**

So God is mocking these people because of what they fear. And look what this fear led the people to.

That you have lied And not remembered Me, Nor taken it to your heart?

False worship leads to either repentance or lying. It really can't do anything else. When we address our fears, we can **tell the truth about it** and that leads to **repenting** of our false worship, our false beliefs, our false conclusions, our stubborn refusal to believe and trust God. Or it drives us to lie **about** ourselves and **to** ourselves. We have to. We have nowhere else to go. **We cannot claim ourselves to be the exception to the rule when the rule is proclaimed by the Creator of the universe.** We can't boldly look God in the face and call **Him** a liar. So we will lie **about** ourselves and **to** ourselves. Look at the contrast here. We remember God. We take the truth of God to heart. We tell the truth about God. Or we fear something other than God and we lie. It is a pretty simple line of reasoning. Nothing complicated here. Isaiah goes on.

Is it not because I have held My peace from of old That you do not fear Me?

Now God lays out a truth that we do well not to forget. God is always capable of making absolutely everyone fear Him at any time. We can play our games with God and seem to get away with them for a while. But the games are all seen for what they are **when God decides to move.** He could end all our false fears in a moment. He would simply need to show us what He is capable of. He could just display His power in an instant and all of our false fears would disappear and **real ones** based on **who God is** would fill our minds. But when that happens, it is not the kind of worship God wants. He wants people who **trust** Him and **have Faith** in Him and **Fear Him** because He is worthy of worship, not because He has risen up to destroy them.

He asks these people, aren't you at the point you are, only because **I have not punished you?** Really, isn't that the only reason you have thought to get away with all this? Because I have not moved in to stop it?

Were there times in your life when you did wrong things but God did not step in to end them? He just let you go on doing what you were doing. Why would God do that? Sometimes it is because God knows what we are made of but we don't. We would tend to believe our good opinions of ourselves. And the only way to cure us of that, the only way we will believe who we really are is for us to see it for ourselves. Sometimes God allows people to live in sin for it to accrue to their judgment. Sometimes God allows people to live in sin for it to be used as true and accurate fuel for repentance. We cannot truly repent if we don't know what we are. God could stop all rebellion in an instance at any time. But often He withholds his punishment or discipline for a purpose.

12 I will declare your righteousness And your works, For they will not profit you.

This is more of God's mocking. Remember that God had just exposed the sin of these people in most graphic terms. Now He addresses these people who tend to think the best of themselves, who minimize their failures and maximize their good intentions. And He says, let me talk about your **righteousness**. Let me talk about **your faithfulness to your husband**. Let me talk about your **goodness**. And when I am done, those listening will want to throw up. That is how good your righteousness is.

Remember it is Isaiah that tells us that all our righteousness is like filthy rags. We know this about us. If there is anything good about us, it has the fingerprints of Jesus all over it.

So God challenges their fear and their worship. And they measure up badly. But they might respond with last ditch efforts of proclaiming their own goodness. And He nips that one in the bud. Yeah I'll talk about your goodness, but that isn't going to work out too well for you either.

13 When you cry out, Let your collection of idols deliver you. But the wind will carry them all away, A breath will take them.

Now God abandons those committed to their **worship** of idols **to** their idols. He says, **have it your way. Have your lover** that you are so committed to, that you so want to give yourself to. Here you go. Enjoy yourselves. But when my judgment comes, and it **will** come, then call out to your idols **then too**. Let that shelf full of idols you bow down to every day come rescue you.

But you know what is going to happen to those competing trusts when God shows up to straighten out His land? Do you know what will happen to that which you choose to **fear** and to **trust** when judgment comes. They will be completely destroyed. And it isn't exactly like it will be a difficult thing. They **are** nothing so they will be **blown away** by nothing.

Anything that we trust to provide us what we need will be seen as a big nothing when God shows up. And God **is** going to show up. Doesn't that inspire in us a need to **reorient what we are fearing**? Do we really want **that which we trust to save us** to disappear under the judgment of God? Should it not be God that we trust. He will never disappear. He will always be God. He will always be worthy of trust.

And what will be the result of proper trust?

But he who puts his trust in Me shall possess the land, And shall inherit My holy mountain."

Just as we first suggested, first we hear about **improper** fear and trust. Then we hear about **proper** trust.

This is being held out, even to the idolatrous people committing their hideous atrocities. And praise God it is being held out to people today, even though we were born in sin and shortly proved that it was deep embedded in us. This is held out **to us** too.

We can trust in God instead of anything or everything else. And the result we get is a permanent blessed security for eternity. We get everything our hearts desire. We get the craving of our deepest needs. And they will all be fully met in Christ in the world He has created for us as His children.

That is the greatest incentive that can be offered because it is everything we want **and** it can never be taken away. The biggest problem is **we have to wait for it**. And the other bad part is **it might cost us things we love now**. And that is hard to give up.

14 And one shall say, "Heap it up! Heap it up! Prepare the way, Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people."

15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

This was to be the process to prepare for the coming of the Lord. It was **partially** lived out in all the spiritual reforms and revivals in scripture. But in the end it will be **perfectly** performed. Every contrary means of worship will be destroyed.

In the reforms in the Old Testament the good kings would arrive and destroy idols and idol worship on the high places. They would literally heap up the idols and destroy them in preparation for the service of God. They would no more be a temptation for unfaithfulness to the bride of God. Eventually the presence of sin will be completely removed. And oh what a wonderful day that will be. No more temptation. Oh how wonderful that will be.

Nothing will interfere with the worship of the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity whose name is set apart from all other names. His name is Holy. There is none like Him. It is all to center on Him. And what does this High and Lofty God say? What does this God say that... His good is so good it makes Him unapproachable by flesh?

"I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Let's look at what others scriptures say about these attributes.

Contrite- what is that? An adjective meaning destruction, a crumbled substance, an object crushed into a powder, or pulverized dust.

Complete Word Study Dictionary, The - The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament.

Isn't that odd? Wouldn't you think God would want some "up and comer" who is excelling in good doctrine and wonderful elocution? Wouldn't you think God would single out people who really have their acts down, highly disciplined in doing just the right things. But no. God wants someone who is first broken. Broken? Destroyed? Crumbled? Surely not. But look. This is what He says:

Psalm 34:18 (NKJV)

18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

Psalm 51:17 (NKJV)

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart-- These, O God, You will not despise.

Isaiah 66:2 (NKJV)

2 For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist," Says the LORD. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.

Don't fear that **because you don't have everything together** God may not want you. Don't fear that your failure looms great and your successes loom small. Don't fear that the three steps forward are always overshadowed by the two steps back.

Are you broken to the place that you **no longer offer up excuses** to God for your behavior?

Are you crushed to the place that **you will do anything** to change your sinful thoughts and behavior?

Have you really gotten that there is not a single thing you have in your life that you can hold up to God and say, **look at this wonderful thing** I have done?

Do you get it like the sinful tax collector who could only pray, God forgive me the sinner?

Guess what? That is the quality God is looking for. That is the quality God creates before He brings a person into His family. A contrite heart.

How about humble?

The word humble means simply **to bow**.

Now humility does not mean to say negative things about yourself. There are lots of people who will demean themselves. This means **to bow**. This means to submit one's self to King Jesus. And someone who is humble **believes** what King Jesus **says** and **does** what King Jesus **commands**. There are lots of self deprecating people who when confronted with Gods word will not believe them, trust them, nor obey them. That is not humble. That is just slick

arrogance. And that arrogance will show itself when you do serious business with the sin. You will find out what is really running the show.

Psalm 9:12 (NKJV)

12 When He avenges blood, He remembers them; He does not forget the cry of the humble.

Psalm 10:12 (NKJV)

12 Arise, O LORD! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget the humble.

Psalm 10:17 (NKJV)

17 LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear,

Psalm 18:27 (NKJV)

27 For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks.

Psalm 25:9 (NKJV)

9 The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way.

Psalm 34:2 (NKJV)

2 My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.

Psalm 69:32 (NKJV)

32 The humble shall see *this and* be glad; And you who seek God, your hearts shall live.

Psalm 147:6 (NKJV)

6 The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground.

Psalm 149:4 (NKJV)

4 For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation.

Isn't this wonderful? We do not have to be impressive. We don't have to be a great speaker. We do not need tremendous insights into scripture. We don't need to look like a Christian hero. We just need to be bowed to King Jesus. We need to be broken to everything that would compete with our trust in God. We need to be crushed to the place that we know **our ways** cannot be trusted to deliver us in **any way** at **any time** for **any thing**. If we are broken and we are bowed we are beloved.

We can't hardly go past this without reading the words of Jesus.

Matthew 5:3-10 (NKJV)

3 "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they

shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This is a backwards kingdom we are part of. Those who are capable of the greatest contribution are those who recognize that they have nothing to contribute at all.

16 For I will not contend forever, Nor will I always be angry; For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls *which* I have made.

God tells us here that if God were to punish wickedness immediately we would all be dead. None of us could live up to God's righteous demands. We would shrink away in discouragement knowing we could never live up to what was required of us. He would always be angry with us if He did not have a plan for that anger to be carried out on His Son.

But we are told that God **did** dish out some of His discipline or punishment. And here is the result.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness I was angry and struck him; I hid and was angry, And he went on backsliding in the way of his heart.

It looks like the him is Israel. So we do not need to believe this is talking about the same individuals in both verses. It looks like God struck Israel due to His covetousness. We looked before at the fact that scripture says that idolatry is covetousness. There is a connection. And think about it. No one worships an idol unless they think that idol can give them something that they want. And it is always something they think the true God either **can't give them** or **won't give them**.

Look at your idols. Don't they always promise you something you covet? Approval, acceptance, pleasure, wealth, security, love, validation, escape, whatever?

Now God struck them and then did nothing more so that they could reveal themselves. He disciplined them, and then He gave them time. And what did they reveal? What we always reveal in real life. We reveal what we are. They went back to their default position. And it certainly was not **bowing** to what King Jesus said. It certainly wasn't a **brokenness** that no longer trusted their ways of doing things. They went right back to sin and idolatry.

But God did not give up on this people.

18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, And restore comforts to him And to his mourners.

19 "I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to *him who is far off* and to *him who is near*," Says the LORD, "And I will heal him."

Here we see it as we have seen it over and over again. The History that God reveals in scripture **is not** the history of people over and over deciding to seek God. It is a history of **God's relentless pursuit of His people**. And we are so fortunate to have a loving God like this. Because we would never have loved God had He not loved us first.

1 John 4:19 (NKJV)

19 We love Him because He first loved us.

And look at this. Where does our spirituality come from? Who creates the good stuff in our lives? Who creates the compliant response that God wants from us?

He says **I CREATE** the fruit of the lips. **I am the one** who causes the stuff that comes out of the lips of the saved. And what is that fruit? **Peace, peace, peace**. Were you outside the Jewish bloodline? **Peace**. Were you inside the Jewish bloodline? **Peace**. Were you raised by believers? **Peace**. Were you raised by people who did not believe in Christ? **Peace**.

Is your life defined by peace? Do you live in peace? That is what God **promises**. That is what God **promotes**. That is what God **provides**. If your life does not have peace, why? There is something wrong. What is it?

Scripture seems pretty quick to draw a conclusion about **why**. And this is very serious business.

20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

21 "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked."

So which describes your life best? What would those who know you best say? Are your days a troubled sea? Are the words of your mouth and the actions of your life likely to be tumultuous, unpredictable, chaotic, with the likelihood of life's events driving up false observations coming out of your mouth. Do life's situations determine what comes out **of your life** and out **of your mouth**?

Or do you work your way back to the sovereignty of God in every event? Are you driven back to the fact that God is sovereign and God can be trusted to love you? And as a result even chaotic events lead back to **a position of peace** when you have had time to think about it. Everything works its way back to **trust in the promises of God** and you are no longer in tumult, swirling up the muck, but you are tranquil, trusting in the promises of God. These are not small questions. If there is no peace for the wicked, and you do not have peace, that is serious stuff. If you have peace even in the midst of strife, that is powerful evidence of your salvation.