

ISAIAH 59

GRACE ABOUNDS!

In this chapter, we have sin portrayed as exceedingly sinful, and grace displayed as exceedingly gracious. The Lord's people are here charged with stopping the current of God's favors to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept His good blessings from them. Nevertheless, it is here promised that God would still work deliverance for them, purely for His own name's sake; and that He would reserve mercy in store for them.

In chapter 58 (verse 3), we found the people complaining because they had not obtained the deliverances which they thought their fasting and prayers would win for them. But now the prophet shows them that this was not God's fault. He was still as able as ever to help; His hand was not shortened, and His power was not at all lessened. His ear was not heavy, so that it could not hear their prayers. Isaiah makes it clear that the people's separation from God was the fruit of their own doings. Sin hinders the Lord's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a wall that separates us from Him.

In order to justify God in His controversy with the people, the prophet shows the people how many and great their iniquities were. Indeed, it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars – any one of which was enough to cause separation between sinful men and a just and holy God. There is nothing to be truly gained by iniquity. Those who walk in the paths of sin promise themselves profit and peace, but they are only deceiving themselves.

In verses 9-15, it seems that the people are now speaking to God – acknowledging the truth of the Lord's charges against them, and expressing their humble submission to the justice and equity of His proceedings against them. When they went into Babylonian captivity, they were in distress – trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, and ruled with rigor. And it seemed that God did not appear on their behalf, to plead their cause. They acknowledged that they themselves had provoked the Lord to thus contend with them. They confessed that they had sinned, and that there was a general decay of moral honesty among them. Although many of their crimes were done secretly, yet they could not be concealed from His all-seeing eye. He saw the sinfulness of all their sins, and that which was most offensive to Him was that there was no judgment and no reformation. If He had seen any signs of repentance, He would have been quickly reconciled to the sinners upon their return from their evil ways.

We have read, to our great amazement, how sin abounded among God's people; but now, beginning in verse 16, we read how grace abounds much more!

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord's people are reproved for their sins and wickedness – verses 1-8
- ❖ Confession of sin is accompanied by sorrow for its consequences – verses 9-15
- ❖ Assurances of mercy and deliverance are promised – verses 16-21

The Lord worked salvation, even for this provoking people – despite all of their provocations. It was purely for His own name’s sake that He did this, for there was certainly no merit in them that caused them to deserve it. And He undertook to do it Himself, so that He would be exalted in His own strength, and for His own glory.

The Lord took notice of His people’s weakness and wickedness. He saw that there was no person who would do anything for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them, or who would lead the way in a work of reformation. Those who complained of the badness of the times did not have enough zeal and courage to act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing was done to stem the tide. There was no one to intercede with God, and to stand in the gap – by prayer – to turn away His wrath. And there was no one to interpose for the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon and run down (verse 14).

So the Lord engaged His own strength and righteousness for His people. Because they had no strength or righteousness of their own, nor any active persons who would earnestly set about to redress the grievances of their iniquities and their calamities; He Himself resolved to use His own arm to bring salvation to His people. He Himself raised up their Deliverer – namely, Christ, Who is that strong Man of His own right hand! We ourselves had no righteousness of our own to produce, for which God might act with favor to us; therefore, in our redemption by Jesus, He brought in the merit and mediation of His own Son.

What is the salvation that is here spoken of as being worked out by the righteousness and strength of God Himself? First, there was to be a temporal salvation for the captive Jews in Babylon. But the prophet’s words also had a reference to an even more glorious salvation that was to be worked out by the Messiah “in the fulness of time!” There are two great promises relating to this salvation. The first of these was that the Son of God would come to be our Redeemer (verse 20). This is the summary of all the promises of both the Old and New Testaments. But the second great promise is that the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our Sanctifier (verse 21). In the Redeemer, there is a new Covenant made with us – a Covenant of promises! And the greatest and most comprehensive promise of that Covenant is that God will give (and continue to give!) His Word and Spirit to His people, throughout all generations. The remnant of faithful believers shall exist forever; as long as the world stands, Christ will have His Church in it. And His Church shall be continually blessed by the constant residence of the Word and Holy Spirit within it!



Lord Jesus, we praise You as the Advocate, Propitiation, Redeemer, and Intercessor of poor perishing sinners. Thank You for working out all our salvation, and for bestowing all the blessed results of it upon us! Amen.