

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



Deal with Sickness and the Symptoms will Follow

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Isaiah 59:9-15; Is. 55:7-9; 58:9-10; 6:5; 42:6-7; Deut. 28:15, 29; Ps. 51:5

Sometimes we spend all our energy trying to manage symptoms while never dealing with the sickness underneath them. It can feel like playing spiritual “whack-a-mole.” One issue pops up, then another, then another, and we keep trying to fix what is visible on the surface without asking what is broken at the heart level. That is the burden of this passage. Isaiah has already made clear that the distance between the people and the Lord is not because God has become weak, inattentive, or unwilling. *“Behold, ADONAI’s hand is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear”* (Is. 59:1). The problem is not with His power or His hearing. The problem is deeper. It is systemic. It is the sickness of sin, rebellion, twistedness, and a heart that has persisted in its own way.

That is why Isaiah 59:9-15 is so weighty and so necessary. The prophet does not merely name the symptoms out in society; he traces them back to the condition of the people themselves. He does not stand at a distance hurling condemnation at others, as though he were untouched by the condition around him. Instead, he identifies with his people. He writes in the first person plural: *“justice is far from us,” “we hope for light,” “we grope along the wall like the blind,” “our transgressions are multiplied before You”* (Is. 59:9-12). This is the posture of someone who has seen the holiness of God and knows, like Isaiah did earlier, *“Oy to me! For I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I am dwelling among a people of unclean lips”* (Is. 6:5). Real healing begins when we stop merely talking about what is wrong “out there” and begin agreeing with God about what is wrong in us.

1. WHEN WE REFUSE TO DEAL WITH THE HEART, WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED BY THE DARKNESS. Isaiah begins this section by saying, *“That is why justice is far from us and righteousness does not reach us. We hope for light, but behold darkness, for brightness, but walk in gloom”* (Is. 59:9). That opening phrase, “that is why,” matters. It ties everything in verses 9-15 back to what has already been exposed in verses 1-8. The darkness they are experiencing is not random. The distance they feel is not unexplained. Justice is remote and righteousness is not catching up to them because their own iniquities, their own twistedness, their own ways and thoughts have made a separation between them and their God. They kept waiting for different outcomes while persisting in the same rebellion. They wanted light without turning from darkness. They wanted the promises of God without surrendering to the ways of God.

That is why this passage connects so powerfully with Isaiah 55 and Isaiah 58. In Isaiah 55, the call is clear: *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous one his thoughts, let him return to ADONAI, so He may have compassion on him”* (Is. 55:7). God had already said, *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways”* (Is. 55:8). And in Isaiah 58, He had already said that if His people turned from oppression, finger-pointing, and twisted speech, then *“your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will be like midday”* (Is. 58:10). But here in Isaiah 59, they hope for light and get darkness; they long for brightness and walk in gloom. Why? Because

they kept doing things their own way. This is a sobering reminder that we cannot persist in our own thoughts, our own patterns, and our own self-justifying ways, and then be shocked when our spiritual lives feel dark and distant.

2. THE REAL PROBLEM IS NOT MERELY THE CIRCUMSTANCES AROUND US BUT THE BLINDNESS WITHIN US. Isaiah continues, *“We grope along the wall like the blind. We grope like those with no eyes. We stumble at noon as at twilight. We are like the dead among the healthy”* (Is. 59:10). That language is painful, but it is honest. The problem is not simply that life is hard or that the world is dark. The deeper problem is that the people themselves are blind. They are being led by what they can feel instead of by what God has said. They are not walking by the voice of the Lord, but by the wall. They are not trusting His word in the darkness; they are fumbling with their own senses, their own instincts, their own interpretations. So even noon feels like twilight. Even where there should be clarity, there is confusion. Even where there should be life, they feel like the dead among the vigorous.

This theme runs all through Isaiah. In Isaiah 6, the people were described as having ears that would not hear and eyes that would not see. In Isaiah 42, the Servant of the Lord was promised as the One who would open blind eyes and bring prisoners out of darkness. The issue, then, is not ultimately the environment but the inability to see rightly before God. That is why one person can walk through dark circumstances with the light of God rising within, while another can stand in broad daylight and still stumble as though it were midnight. Moses had warned about this in Deuteronomy: *“You will grope at noon as the blind person gropes in darkness”* (Deut. 28:29). That warning is being fulfilled here. When we are alienated from the Lord, even blessings feel gray, and even moments of clarity feel confusing. But when He opens our eyes, then even in darkness there can be dawn.

3. HOPE BEGINS WHEN WE STOP DEFENDING OURSELVES AND START AGREEING WITH GOD. The turning point in this passage is not that the people have fixed themselves, but that they finally begin to tell the truth. *“For our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us, for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities”* (Is. 59:12). This is one of the most hopeful moments in the chapter because the people are no longer blaming, excusing, or pretending. They admit that their rebellions are stacked up in plain sight before God. Their sins answer back against them. They have no defense to offer because the accusation is true. And yet this is exactly where mercy can begin to do its work. As long as we are hiding, minimizing, or shifting responsibility, real change cannot happen. But once we begin to say the same thing about our condition that God says, we are finally standing in the place where healing can come.

Isaiah then gives painful detail to that confession: *“We know our iniquities: transgressing and denying ADONAI, turning back from following our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering lying words from the heart”* (Is. 59:12b-13). These are sins against God and sins against people. They are outward actions and inward corruptions. They are abusive words, stubborn defiance, and lies conceived in the heart before they ever reach the lips. Then the prophet describes the social result: *“Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far off. For truth has stumbled in the street, and uprightness cannot enter”* (Is. 59:14). Finally, *“truth is missing, and whoever shuns evil becomes prey”* (Is. 59:15). This is what happens when the sickness is left untreated. But the beautiful thing is that the people have begun to recognize it.

They are no longer merely describing the symptoms; they are naming the disease. And that is where hope begins, because the Lord is not repelled by honest repentance. He moves toward it.

CONCLUSION

This passage is a mercy because it refuses to flatter us. It will not let us settle for shallow diagnoses. It will not let us blame the darkness while ignoring the blindness, or lament the symptoms while protecting the sickness. It exposes how our ways, our thoughts, our twistedness, and our rebellion produce the very chaos, distance, and confusion we grieve. And yet, even here, there is grace. The fact that the people can say, "*we know our iniquities*," means they are no longer fully numb to them. The fact that Isaiah includes himself means there is no self-righteous distance here. The pain is shared, the confession is honest, and the need for God is unmistakable.

The passage ends by saying that when Adonai saw it, "*it was displeasing in His eyes that there was no justice*" (Is. 59:15). That is not the language of a God who does not care. That is the language of a God who sees, who is grieved by sin, and who is about to act because no one else can truly deal with the disease. That is where our hope rests too. We do not heal ourselves by better symptom management. We come honestly before the Lord, asking Him to search us, expose what is twisted, and do in us what we cannot do for ourselves. It's time to stop managing appearances, stop explaining yourself, stop waiting for light while clinging to your own way. Bring the sickness into the light. Agree with God. Let Him deal with the root, and the change in symptoms will follow.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways do you tend to focus on symptoms instead of asking God to expose the deeper heart issue?
2. What stands out to you most about Isaiah identifying himself with the people instead of distancing himself from them?
3. How does Isaiah 59 challenge the idea that spiritual darkness is only about circumstances and not about our own blindness?
4. Why is honest agreement with God about our sin such an important step toward healing and restoration?
5. What would it look like for you this week to stop persisting in your own way and begin walking more fully in God's way?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You that Your hand is not too short to save and Your ear is not too dull to hear. Thank You that when we feel distance, darkness, and confusion, the answer is not that You have failed us, but that You love us enough to tell us the truth about our condition. Search our hearts. Expose what is twisted in us. Show us where we have been managing symptoms instead of surrendering the deeper sickness to You. Lord, forgive us for persisting in our own ways and thoughts. Forgive us for blindness, for self-deception, for speaking wrongly, for resisting Your voice, and for the ways our sin has affected others. Give us grace to agree with You fully and honestly. Open our eyes through Your Spirit, and let the work of Your righteousness be formed in us and lived out through us. Let light rise in our darkness, let truth stand again in our streets, and let our lives reflect Your justice, Your mercy, and Your peace. *B'Shem Yeshua*, In the name of Yeshua, amen.