

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



What's the Diagnosis, Doctor? Just Say it.

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Isaiah 59:1-8; Is. 55:6-9; 57:15, 17-18; Is. 58:3, 9-14; Is. 59:1-8; Ps. 51:18-19

There are moments when a soft answer is not the right answer. When something is deadly, when the condition is serious, what we need is clarity. We need the truth said plainly. Isaiah 59 opens that way. The Lord does not underplay the problem. He does not soothe the people with vague encouragement while the sickness keeps spreading. He begins to lay out the diagnosis with precision: what our sinfulness is, what it does, and the damage it leaves behind. And the reason He speaks this clearly is not to crush us, but to bring us to the place where we can finally submit to the treatment plan—to the only place where healing can actually begin.

This chapter does not stand alone. It grows out of the invitation of Isaiah 55, where the Lord calls the thirsty to come and receive freely, and where He also says, *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous one his thoughts”* (Is. 55:7). The problem is not that our ways are a little off and just need adjusting. The problem is that our ways are not His ways at all. We keep trusting our own thoughts, our own instincts, our own preferences, our own sense of what seems right to us. Isaiah 59 says, in essence, if you want to know why there is distance, confusion, brokenness, and no peace, here is the diagnosis.

1. THE PROBLEM IS NOT WITH GOD'S POWER OR GOD'S HEARING

Isaiah begins by clearing away the wrong accusation. *“Behold, ADONAI's hand is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear”* (Is. 59:1). The issue is not that God lacks strength or ability. It is not that He has somehow become inattentive. It is not that He is unable to rescue, or unwilling to listen. His hand is not limited. His ear is not impaired. The Lord is not the weak point in this relationship. He is not the one who has drifted. He is not the one who has become distant. That matters, because as soon as we are frustrated, it is easy to start assuming that maybe God is not showing up, maybe God is not listening, maybe God is not doing what He promised.

But Isaiah says the cause for the separation is rooted in this: *“Rather, your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear”* (Is. 59:2). The Lord has not hidden Himself in the sense of abandoning His people. It is our crookedness, our twisting, our rebellion that has become the barrier. It is like running away and then complaining that we've been abandoned—wandering away and then panicking because we cannot see the One who never actually lost sight of us. The issue is not His absence, but our sin. That is why the entry point back is not self-justification, religious performance, or blaming circumstances. It is brokenness. It is confession. It is returning. As the Lord says, *“I dwell in a high and holy place, yet also with a contrite and humble spirit”* (Is. 57:15).

2. SIN IS NOT VAGUE; IT SHOWS UP IN OUR HANDS, WORDS, AND SYSTEMS

The Lord does not leave the diagnosis in broad categories. He gets painfully specific. *“For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity. Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness”* (Is. 59:3). That movement is striking. It goes from hands to fingers, from lips to tongue. In other words, this is not accidental or theoretical. This is personal, deliberate,

detailed. Blood on the hands points to the damage done to others. Fingers point to the specific ways we manipulate, twist, and carry out what is crooked. Lips and tongue point to speech that is false, destructive, and rooted in wickedness. The Lord is exposing the fact that sin is not merely an inward feeling; it works itself out in what we do and in what we say.

And then Isaiah broadens the diagnosis to the way God's people are treating one another. *"No one sues justly, and none pleads a case honestly. They trust in confusion and speak lies"* (Is. 59:4). No one is calling out in righteousness. No one is doing justice in faithfulness. Even the systems that ought to uphold what is right become twisted by self-interest. People stop asking, "Is this true? Is this righteous? Is this just?" and instead ask, "Does this work for me?" That is how an entire culture becomes unmoored. Trust is placed in what Isaiah calls *tohu* (תְּהוֹ), in confusion, emptiness, instability. The atmosphere becomes one of unreliability. Truth is negotiable. Principles bend. Words are twisted. And all of it is still our old problem: "me-first/my-way." That is why the Lord kept saying in Isaiah 55 and 58, abandon your ways, abandon your thoughts, stop using religion to get your own way, and return to Mine.

3. OUR OWN WAYS ALWAYS PROMISE LIFE, BUT THEY PRODUCE RUIN AND NO PEACE

Isaiah then uses vivid pictures to show what human-centered living actually produces. *"They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web"* (Is. 59:5). At first glance, both images can seem productive. Eggs suggest life. A web can look intricate and impressive. But these eggs bring death, and these webs cannot clothe anyone. That is the point. Our ways—our plans—can seem clever. Our schemes can look like they will finally secure what we want. But when they break open, what comes out is deadly. When we try to cover ourselves with the things we have made, we find that our own works cannot cover us. They leave us exposed, tangled, and unsatisfied.

That is why Isaiah says, *"Their feet run after evil... Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity. Violence and ruin are on their highways"* (Is. 59:7). The thoughts become plans, the plans become actions, and the actions shape a whole path of life. And in the end, *"They do not know the path of peace... Whoever walks in them will not experience shalom"* (Is. 59:8). That is the hard truth. Our ways do not lead to peace or wholeness. They do not lead to rest. They do not lead to shalom. They may promise satisfaction, but they cannot deliver it. The world's ways cannot give what only God's ways can give. His way is the way of peace, holiness, guidance, and redemption. Our way is the way of confusion, fracture, striving, and disintegration.

CONCLUSION

This is the diagnosis, and the Lord does not sugarcoat it. Our natural ways are not even close to His ways. Left to ourselves, we do not naturally drift toward righteousness. We drift toward self-protection, self-justification, self-interest, and self-rule. We twist what is right in order to get what we want. We convince ourselves that we are fine, or at least "not that bad," while the deadly symptoms keep spreading through our words, our relationships, our communities, and our inner lives. Isaiah 59 is meant to wake us up. The Lord is exposing the disease because He intends to heal it. He is telling the truth because He is merciful.

When, like a doctor, the Lord describes your condition, don't argue with the diagnosis. Stop softening it. Stop hiding behind religious motion while holding onto your own way. Bring the Lord your crookedness, your self-centeredness, your rationalizations, your hidden violence, your finger-pointing, your empty words, your weary attempts to cover yourself. Return to Him

with a broken and contrite heart. Lay down your way and choose His. The beautiful hope is that the One who names the sickness is also the One who says, *“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him. I will lead him and restore comfort to him”* (Is. 57:18). He is not calling you to despair. He is calling you to repentance, so that He may revive, restore, and lead you in the path of shalom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think we are often more comfortable with a softened diagnosis than with God telling us the truth plainly?
2. In what ways have you been tempted to assume that God is distant, when the real issue may be something in your own heart or ways?
3. Which part of Isaiah 59:3–4 stands out most to you right now: hands, fingers, lips, tongue, or the failure to call out in righteousness?
4. Where have you seen the “spider webs” or “adder’s eggs” of human wisdom promise life but produce frustration, confusion, or harm instead?
5. What would it look like for you, in a practical and specific way, to forsake your own way and thought-patterns this week and walk in the Lord’s ways instead?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King, thank You for loving us enough to tell us the truth. Thank You that You do not flatter us in our sin or leave us in our confusion. You see clearly what is twisted in us, what is self-centered in us, what is destructive in us, and yet You still call us back. Forgive us for blaming You when we have wandered, for performing religion while resisting Your heart, and for trusting our own ways more than Yours.

Search us and expose what needs to be exposed. Bring us to true brokenness, not shame that hides, but humility that returns. Teach us to forsake our ways and our thoughts and to walk in Yours. Remove from us the things that block our hearing and harden our hearts. Lead us in the way of peace, the way of righteousness, the way of shalom. Revive what is crushed in us, restore what is disordered in us, and make us people who reflect Your heart in our words, our actions, and our paths

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.