

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes: Isaiah Chapter 56 - 58

6/11/14

Chapter 56 Study Notes

Salvation for Others

1 This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. **2** Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." **3** Let no foreigner who has bound himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely exclude me from his people." And let not any eunuch complain, "I am only a dry tree." **4** For this is what the LORD says: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant-- **5** to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. **6** And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant-- **7** these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." **8** The Sovereign LORD declares-- he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

56:2 God commanded his people to rest and honor him on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). He wants us to serve him every day, but he wants us to make one day special when we rest and focus our thoughts on him. For the Israelites, this special day was the Sabbath (Saturday). Some Christians set Saturday aside as this special day, but many accept Sunday (the day of the week that Jesus rose from the dead) as the "Lord's Day," a day of rest and honor to God. Do you make Sunday special?

56:3 Isaiah clearly proclaims the radical message that God's blessings are for all people, even Gentile foreigners and eunuchs, who were often excluded from worship and not even considered citizens in Israel. Whatever your race, social position, work, or financial situation, God's blessings are as much for you as for anyone else. No one must exclude in any way those God chooses to include.

56:7 Jesus quoted from this verse when he threw the money changers out of the temple (Mark 11:17). See the second note on Mark 11:15-17. **56:9-11** The "watchmen" were the nation's leaders. The leaders of Israel were blind to every danger and thus did not warn when danger was coming. Apathetic about their people's needs, they were more concerned about satisfying their own greed. Leadership's special privileges can cause leaders either to sacrifice for the good of their people or to sacrifice their people for their own greed. If you are in a leadership position, use it for the good of your people.

Chapter 57 Study Notes

1 The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. **2** Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death. **3** "But you--come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes! **4** Whom are you mocking?"

At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars? **5** You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags. **6** [The idols] among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion; they, they are your lot. Yes, to them you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings. In the light of these things, should I relent? **7** You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill; there you went up to offer your sacrifices. **8** Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols. Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide; you made a pact with those whose beds you love, and you looked on their nakedness. **9** You went to Molech with olive oil and increased your perfumes. You sent your ambassadors far away; you descended to the grave itself! **10** You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint. **11** "Whom have you so dreaded and feared that you have been false to me, and have neither remembered me nor pondered this in your hearts? Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear me? **12** I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you. **13** When you cry out for help, let your collection [of idols] save you! The wind will carry all of them off, a mere breath will blow them away. But the man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain."

57:7-8 Marriage is an exclusive relationship where a man and a woman become one. Adultery breaks this beautiful bond of unity. When the people turned from God and gave their love to idols, God said they were committing spiritual adultery—breaking their exclusive commitment to God. How could people give their love to worthless wood and stone idols instead of to the God who made them and loved them so very much?

57:9 Molek was an Ammonite god whose worship included child sacrifice.

57:12 God says that he will expose their good deeds for what they really are—mere pretensions of doing good. Isaiah warned these people that all their righteousness and works would not save them any more than their weak, worthless idols. We cannot gain our salvation through good deeds because our best deeds are not good enough to outweigh our sins. Salvation is a gift from God, received only through faith in Christ, not good works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Comfort for the Contrite

14 And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people." **15** For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. **16** I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me-- the breath of man that I have created. **17** I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. **18** I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, **19** creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them." **20** But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. **21** "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

57:14-21 Verses 1-13 speak of pride and lust; verses 14-21 tell how God relates to those who are humble and repentant ("contrite"). The high and holy God came down to our level to save us because it is impossible for us to go up to his level to save ourselves (see 2 Chronicles 6:18; Psalm 51:1-7; Philippians 2).

Chapter 58 Study Notes

True Fasting

1 "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. **2** For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them. **3** 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. **4** Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. **5** Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? **6** "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? **7** Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? **8** Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. **9** Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, **10** and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. **11** The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. **12** Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. **13** "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, **14** then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

58:1-14 True worship was more than religious ritual, going to the temple every day, fasting, and listening to Scripture readings. These people missed the point of a living, vital relationship with God. He doesn't want us acting pious when we have unforgiven sin in our hearts and perform sinful practices with our hands. More important even than correct worship and doctrine is genuine compassion for the poor, the helpless, and the oppressed.

58:6-12 We cannot be saved by deeds of service without faith in Christ, but our faith lacks sincerity if it doesn't reach out to others. Fasting can be beneficial spiritually and physically, but at its best fasting helps only the person doing it. God says he wants our service to go beyond our own personal growth to acts of kindness, charity, justice, and generosity. True fasting is more than what we don't eat; it also involves pleasing God by applying his Word to our lives.

58:13-14 The day of rest should be observed and regarded not only because Sabbath-keeping is a commandment but also because it is best for us and it honors God. Keeping the Sabbath shows proper respect to God, our Creator, who also rested on the seventh day (Genesis 2:3). It also unifies our family and sets priorities for them. Our day of rest refreshes us spiritually and physically—providing time when we can gather together for worship and reflect on God without the stress of our everyday activities.