

Owning Our Sin.

Isaiah 59:9-15.

Sunday evening, November 23, 2008.

I. A change of person. Vs. 9-15

A. Note the “they” and “their” of Vss. 4-8.

Isaiah, in speaking of the wickedness of the nation, distanced himself from his people. He sees himself as a servant of the Lord; one who looks to the Lord; seeks after Him, and seeks to follow Him. He is a man who is of a different spirit than are the people he ministers to.

B. Now he turns his attention to the consequences of the sins of the nation, and here he includes himself with his people. His language changes from “they and their” to “us, we, and our” in Vss. 9-15.

C. Daniel does the same thing in his prayer for the nation of Israel as he prays for restoration and forgiveness. Daniel 9:3-19.

D. On the one hand he distances himself from the nation, for he is of a different spirit individually speaking.

On the other hand he owns the sins of the nation, and the consequences that have come, because he sees himself as part of the nation, collectively speaking.

E. We too are part of the collective sins of our nation, and we too are part of inheriting the collective consequences.

II. Seeking, but not finding. Vss. 9-11.

A. Israel is represented in this passage as looking for...; as groping after...; as hungering after... (the growling of a hungry bear); and as moaning, or mourning for (the moaning dove) the Lord’s justice and salvation.

B. They are also represented as not finding and receiving any of it.

As such they are described as a most pitiable people and a most miserable people.

C. This presents us with a dilemma for the gospel teaches us, and promises to us, that in seeking we shall find and in asking we shall receive, and in knocking the door shall be opened unto us. Luke 11:9,10.

The gospel furthermore pronounces those hungering after righteousness blessed, for they shall be filled, and those mourning blessed, for they shall be comforted.

D. To understand this dilemma we need to understand that Israel was serious (even desperate) to receive the blessings of salvation. We also need to understand that they were serious and desperate not to receive it in the way the Lord offered it.

1. They sought it by studying God’s word; by observing His ordinances; even

by

fasting.

2. The Lord offered it by way of a life transformed by grace.

By way of an inward and new life principle.

By way of a whole new agenda in their hearts.

3. When it came right down to it they were not interested in such a change for...

- By undoing the heavy burdens they saw their profits evaporate 58:6.

- By extending themselves to the hungry and naked they saw themselves

inconvenienced. 58:7.

- By no longer pointing the finger at others they saw that they had to own their own sin. 58:9.
- And by extending their souls to the hungry and the afflicted they saw that they would not be extending it to their own profits and pleasures. 58:10.

E. Israel's dilemma was the dilemma of the double minded man.

It was the dilemma of the rich young ruler who desperately wanted salvation, but not in the way it was offered to him in the form of a transformed life.

It was the dilemma of the believers of James 4:1-10 who also sought and asked, but did not receive.

Application:

What about you? In looking and longing and living for gospel blessings do you seek them in the way of a transformed life; a new life principle; a new agenda? Are you open to the nature of this new agenda? Are you willing to be made open to it? To embrace it? Salvation cost the Lord everything; in a real way it costs you everything too. Your own way and will and agenda... crucified with Christ. Old things passing away; yes our most treasured old things. Phil. 3:7,8. All things becoming new, but are you open to the nature of these new things? Here the gate and the way become narrow, and few find them; most are like Israel of Isaiah 58 and 59 and like Philipians 3:18,19.

III. The consequences. Vss. 12-15.

These are the consequences of holding fast to our own agenda and refusing the salvation of the Lord in the way it is offered.

- A. Our sins continue to multiply, and they testify against us that we are not willing to receive salvation in the way the Lord offers it in the form of a transformed life. Our sin is still with us and deep inside we know it Vs. 12.
- B. In the pursuit of our own agenda Justice is turned back.
Justice or judgment means looking at things and speaking about things the way the Lord does. His understanding and perspective. Vs. 14.
- C. When the just understanding and perspective of the Lord is turned back, truth falls in the streets and is suppressed. Vs. 14.
- D. Righteousness is the way the Lord deals with and interacts with people and situations. With rebellious man's agenda in place righteousness stands afar off.
- E. Equity is what is not directly spelled out by God, but it follows as a good and necessary consequence. So God's commands forbid the contrary sins by the principle of equity, and vice versa.
- F. A man who departs from his own agenda and follows the Lord makes himself thereby the object of scorn and ridicule and even persecution.

Application:

Seeing what our own agenda accomplishes for us ought to turn our own agenda from a bargain to a burden in our own experience. From something we desperately cling to, to something we desperately want to get rid of. Here we come to the cross of Christ, where by the power of the Holy Spirit we and our agenda become crucified with Christ, and from where we are also raised with Him in newness of life.