

November 11th, 2018
“Grace That is Greater Than All our Sin”
Isaiah 59

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Nov 4 John 1-2	Nov 8 John 9-10
Nov 5 John 3-4	Nov 9 John 11-12
Nov 6 John 5-6	Nov 10 John 13-15
Nov 7 John 7-8	Nov 11 John 16-18

Lesson Introduction: *Our lesson this week highlights the total depravity of mankind and speaks to the incredible grace the LORD shows in saving sinners. As we study this week, we will spend quite a bit of time considering the depth of wickedness that exists in the human heart apart from faith in Christ. Throughout the book of Isaiah, we have seen time and time again how rebellious the human heart is. We might begin to wonder why it necessary to continually be reminded of our natural hearts. When considering this question, pastor and author John Piper stated, “Knowing the extent of our deep-seated rebellion will stun us at the long-suffering grace and patience of God toward us. The way we worship God and the way we treat other people, especially our enemies, are profoundly and wonderfully affected by knowing our depravity to the full.” As we study this week, may our eyes be open to the extent of our rebellion, and may God be more glorified in our lives as we consider His grace toward us.*

Key Memory Verses: Isaiah 59:1

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **The heart of mankind is totally wicked, and its way leads to death (V. 1-13)**
- **The Lord’s hand is not too short to save even the most wicked sinner (V. 1, 21).**
- **The Spirit of God changes the heart of man, that we might walk in His ways (V. 21)**

Isaiah 59:1-13, 21 (ESV)

1 *“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
2 but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.*

3 *For your hands are defiled with blood
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies;
your tongue mutters wickedness.
4 No one enters suit justly;
no one goes to law honestly;
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,
they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.
5 They hatch adders' eggs;
they weave the spider's web;
he who eats their eggs dies,
and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched.
6 Their webs will not serve as clothing;
men will not cover themselves with what they make.
Their works are works of iniquity,
and deeds of violence are in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
and they are swift to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;
desolation and destruction are in their highways.
8 The way of peace they do not know,
and there is no justice in their paths;
they have made their roads crooked;
no one who treads on them knows peace.
9 Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not overtake us;
we hope for light, and behold, darkness,
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
10 We grope for the wall like the blind;
we grope like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight,
among those in full vigor we are like dead men.
11 We all growl like bears;
we moan and moan like doves;
we hope for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied before you,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
13 transgressing, and denying the Lord,
and turning back from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words...*

21 *“And as for me, this is my covenant with them,” says the Lord: “My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,” says the Lord, “from this time forth and forevermore.*

Discussion Section 1: The Depravity of Mankind (V. 2-13)

- What does **verse 2** reveal as the result of sin?
- What does **verse 6** tell us about our attempts to appear righteous?
- What do **verses 10-11** show us concerning the results of man's efforts?
- What is ultimately learned about the human heart from these verses?

Note: *This year Ligonier Ministries, in conjunction with Lifeway Research, conducted a state of theology survey. Among other things, the survey revealed that 52% of evangelicals agreed with the statement, "everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature." This understanding of the nature of man leads to misplaced trust in works, and a lack of awe concerning the grace of God.*

*As we read **verses 2-13**, the depravity that is revealed should be astounding. We see from the beginning that Israel's "iniquities have made a separation" between them and God. **Romans 3:23** teaches that, not just Israel, but "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." How seriously we should take our sin! The wickedness in us is not just something that causes riffs in our relationship with God, but rather, it causes separation, now and eternally (**Romans 6:23**).*

*While one sin is enough to cause this separation, our passage today reveals the extent of Israel's wickedness, as well as ours. We learn that evil is not simply a way of life that we sometimes stumble into, but is something we run towards, and indeed it is what fills our thoughts (**V. 7**). We also see that justice and peace are not just sometimes overlooked, but rather we **do not know** the way of peace, and no justice exists in our paths (**V. 8**). Too often we think of ourselves as mostly good people who are occasionally overcome by evil. We believe that if our good simply outweighs our bad, the Lord will be honored. Yet **verse 6** explains that our "works are works of iniquity."*

*Ultimately, our efforts toward righteousness are as good as a blind man groping at a wall, hoping he will find something to hold onto (**V. 10**). We are not mostly good people who are occasionally overcome by evil, rather we are wicked to the core, having nothing good in us apart*

*from the work of the Spirit of God (**Psalm 16:2, Romans 7:18, Jeremiah 17:9**). **Romans 14:23** tells us, "whatever does not proceed from faith is sin," and **Romans 3:10-12** teaches plainly that no one does good or seeks God naturally. This means that we are completely depraved, making us dead men (**Ephesians 2:1**), unable to come to God by our own power.*

Discussion Section 2: The Power of God in Salvation (V.1, 21)

- What does **verse 1** reveal about God's power over the sin we cannot overcome?
- What do we learn from **verse 21** concerning how we walk by faith in God?

Note: *The time spent considering our depravity in section one is not meant to cause us to become hopeless, but rather, it should lead us to praise and worship of God! When we misunderstand our state of wickedness before Christ saved us, we will never fully grasp the depth of God's grace, and in turn, we will lack the joy that comes as we dwell on His amazing grace towards us. In **verse 1**, we see that, even though we are wicked to the core, we are not unable to be redeemed. This is not due to our resolve to do better, but because the Lord's hand is not weakened or shortened by our depravity. As the old hymn says:*

**"Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin!"**

*Verse 21 reminds us that any good in us is because of His Spirit that is upon us. When we come to the light, when we call on Christ as Lord in faith, when we walk in His ways, when we live for Him, all of this is by the power of His Spirit (**John 1:11-13, John 3:21, 1 Corinthians 12:3, Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 15:10**). Understanding our depravity helps us understand more clearly the grace of God in bringing us to, and sustaining salvation, and leads to a life of praise of His glorious grace!*

Application:

- How might this text affect the way you love and worship God?
- How might this text affect the way you treat others, particularly your enemies?