

**[Transcript] *Isaiah: The Lord Saves, Part 9***  
**“True Faith Lived Out” | Isaiah 56-59**  
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Hello, church. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Andrew, one of the pastors here at the church. It's my privilege to be preaching God's word for you this day. Before I go any further, I do want to make sure of one announcement regarding our church staffing situation. Many of you know that Sassa has been working for our church as the missions officer and she recently rolled off of that position in July in preparation for her being part of the DMM Hub, whenever that happens. So, I just want to make sure that everybody knows that she worked faithfully and we're getting ready to send her out as a missionary between our two churches. And I thank her for her faithful service and work in our church.

## **Introduction**

At this time we want into today's message. The title of today's sermon is "True Faith Lived Out" and it's going to be from Isaiah 56-59.

I want to start with a very important question. The question is: How are we to live in light of God's grace? If we are justified- that means being made right with God, our sins forgiven and credited with righteousness- If we are justified by God, by God's grace alone, then what reason should we have to do good deeds? What reason should we have to live the way that God would want us to live?

This has been the key issue for people for- literally- thousands of years. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament talk about it. From the New Testament, there were a couple of very relevant cases for me to mention right now.

First, Paul addressed this, in his letter to the Romans and other places as well, for people who were saying, "If I am saved by God's grace, then I can just go on sinning and living the way that I want so that I can get more of God's grace!"

Second, James also addressed this issue in his letter for people who were saying, "I have faith in God's grace as well, but it's a personal, private faith, so it doesn't come out in my actions."

Well, let me make it clear that we are justified by God's grace alone and it's based on the work and the person of Christ alone, through the means of faith alone- that means trusting in God and his salvation as revealed in the Scripture.

As you might have heard before, this truth: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." And that's a true statement as well. If we are truly transformed by God's grace, we will die to our sinful nature. We will have a new heart that wants to please God. And if we truly have faith in Christ, it will be expressed publicly in the way that we live and in the way that we relate with others.

Let me pause and give a word of warning here. If we do go on carelessly living our lives to gratify our own sinful desires, then we really need to examine whether we are truly saved or not! If we do not live publicly in a way that is consistent with God and his character and his heart, then we need to examine whether we are truly saved or not! This is a stern and serious warning because there are many in our generation who are deceived into a false sense of security that they are saved when they may not be.

I don't mean to say this in a judgmental or in a mean way- in fact, I'm saying this with a weeping and bleeding heart for us! I'm saying this with LOVE because I want us to have faith that is securely placed in the truth of Jesus Christ and God's Word! And I also say this with great HOPE- with the great HOPE that this will be great news for all of us to hear that will transform our lives!

So, we will see today Isaiah's own addressing of this issue as well from chapters 56-59.

And just to get you up to speed again in the book of Isaiah, we're in the last 2 parts of the book's study of Isaiah, and here's an overview.

The first big section, out of the three (1-39), was God's messages for the people of Israel during Isaiah's lifetime and that message was that God would discipline them- lovingly discipline them- by sending them into exile and that he would judge all the nations of the earth.

The second section, out of three sections in Isaiah (40-55), was God's message for the people of Israel in exile in Babylon two centuries after Isaiah's lifetime and it was actually a message of comfort that God did care for and love his people and actually that God would present a solution for their sins, the heart problem of their sins.

Now in this third and final section of Isaiah, which we're going to cover in two parts, this week and next, we're going to see God's message for the people of Israel after the exile, returning from Babylon to Jerusalem, and they were to know, how now to live in light of God's salvation as well as what God's end game will ultimately be.

The "one thing" of Isaiah 56-59:

***Strive for justice and righteousness as  
a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ.***

Three parts in Isaiah 56-59:

1. God's Command (56:1-8)
2. "True" Faith vs. "False" Faith (56:9-59:8)
3. God's Provision (59:9-21)

Let's first pray and ask for God's grace over us as we are in God's word today.

Lord, may you be at work through the proclamation of your word, the preaching of your word. May it cut into people's hearts, dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, judging the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts. May it bring transformation for your glory in this time. It's in your name we pray. Amen.

## **I. God's Command (56:1-8)**

Let's go ahead and take a look at God's command and in Isaiah 56:1-8,

### **A. God commanded his people to live out genuine faith in tangible ways.**

#### **1. Read Isaiah 56:1:**

*1 Thus says the Lord:  
"Keep justice, and do righteousness,  
for soon my salvation will come,  
and my righteousness be revealed.*

Just to preface this, if it was "God's grace only", that means Isaiah 40-55, and verse 1- the verse I just read here- wasn't a part of it, then it would seem like God doesn't really care how people lived. Whether it's sinful or not, God wouldn't really care.

However, if there was only verse 1, without "God's grace" presented in Isaiah chapters 40-55, then it would seem like God's salvation would be based on their own righteous and just acts. And that would not

be the case either. You see here in this context, Israel has heard the message that it was God's loving discipline that sent them into exile, it would be God's comfort and love and provision to take care of their sins, and God's invitation to fellowship and serve him by his grace.

And so God says here, "Thus, this is what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to: Keep justice, and do righteousness because it's coming soon. My salvation is coming soon so have faith in me. And they way that you're going to show that you trust me is by obeying these two commands to keep justice and to do righteousness."

The big question here that we need to think about is the why.

## 2. Why did God give this command?

We have to understand that one of the primary purposes of the Law, besides exposing the sinfulness of people, was to reveal the character of God. The Law as presented in the Old Testament- all of the rules, all of the sacrificial system, all of those things- were to highlight and reveal the character of God.

And so, think about it. As God here told his people to keep justice and righteousness, what he's saying is that this is a reflection of God himself- that he is perfectly just and righteous, that he does what is perfectly just and what is perfectly righteous.

And I want to just remind us that perfect justice and righteousness is actually a really, really good thing! I mean God would not be God unless he was perfectly just and righteous unless he was morally perfect unless he treated people with perfect fairness. That's who God is and this is an excellent thing.

And then you get to verses 2-8 of chapter 56 and God gives an example of first his grace and then his character. In God's grace, he says, the people of Israel will include "outcasts"- specifically he says foreigners and eunuchs can actually be part of the people of God. And then he goes on to describe what characterized the people of God. He said what will characterize them is that they would choose things that would please God. And specifically, he talks about Sabbath. He actually talks about it three times in verses 2-8, and how keeping the Sabbath would be a trademark of the true people of God.

Why was keeping Sabbath important? And I would say that part of the law to keep the Sabbath, that was a prominent part of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:8-11 describes when God says, "Keep the Sabbath holy because I am holy." So God commands his people to keep the Sabbath as a reflection of the character of God that he is holy. So as they kept the Sabbath, as the people of God dropped all of their work during that day, and they paused, they would remember that God is holy. It was for their benefit to remember the character of God as holy.

Jesus talks about this as well. In Matthew chapter 7, he talks about this relationship between faith and actions and deeds and works. From Matthew 7:12-27, here at the beginning of it, he actually says that "The Golden Rule" ...

*Matthew 7:12 (ESV): 12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

..reflects God's character. That actually is a summary of the Law and the Prophets. And why does he say to keep that command? Because that's what God does. God in his justice and in his righteousness treats other people with justice and righteousness as well. Like I said, that is an excellent, great, good thing for God to be and for God to do. And God does that himself and God commands his people to do "The Golden Rule" as well to treat others the way that they want to be treated. That reflects God's character.

Jesus goes on to describe, that's how you're going to tell who the real citizens of God's kingdom are and who the false- the people who are not truly citizens of God's kingdom. He says you can identify them by the fruit of their lives- by the actions and their deeds and whether they really keep that Golden Rule of not. He says this...

Matthew 7:16-17 (NLT). *16 You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? 17 A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit.*

So you see that God commands his people to live out a genuine faith, a true faith, in tangible ways.

Just to explain the core difference between all other religions - all other worldviews - and the gospel message is that all these other religions and all these other worldviews hold on to this position that we have to do things in order to earn our reward, in order to merit something in return. Compared to what the gospel is, the gospel simply is this: we have already received our reward from God. Jesus Christ has actually already bought that reward for us, purchased it on our behalf. And what we do isn't earning that reward, it is a reflection of the giver's heart. It's a reflection of God and His character and His heart for us.

And so here we've talked mostly of the "why" and we've generally talked about the "what" so let's dive a little bit deeper into the "what" now.

## **II. "True" Faith vs. "False" Faith (56:9-59:8)**

### **B. God detailed the difference between "true" and "false" faith.**

#### **1. Read 58:3-5.**

*3 Why have we fasted, and you see it not?  
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?  
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,  
and oppress all your workers.*

*4 Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to hit with a wicked fist.  
Fasting like yours this day  
will not make your voice to be heard on high.*

*5 Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day for a person to humble himself?  
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,  
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?  
Will you call this a fast,  
and a day acceptable to the Lord?*

So, here the people of Israel are puzzled. They're confused about why their fasting wasn't "working". They're saying to God, "didn't you see what we did today?" "Didn't you just see us fasting, God?" "Don't we get any credit for humbling ourselves this way?" This was like the people of God were bargaining with God. This is in essence a merit system where they were doing something in order to get something from God, wasn't it?

So God says in the latter part of verse 3 and all of verse 4 that he sees them. He sees not only what's inside their hearts but he also acknowledges and sees the way that they lived- that they actually continued to seek out their own pleasures in the way that they lived, they continued to act unfairly towards the people who worked under them, they constantly were fighting against each other. And he said you know these things that you're doing really matter to me, they count.

Whereas the people of God, they were confused because they were doing some spiritual things like fasting but then they were living totally dichotomized lives where in other areas of their lives, they were totally living for themselves. And this is the problem of a dichotomized life. We think God only sees parts of our lives and only parts of our lives matter. God sees all of our lives because all of our lives matter to God.

So in verse 5, God questions them. He says "Why would I accept this kind of fasting, this kind of fasting that is just external acts of bowing down their heads like weeds and spreading out sackcloth and ashes

underneath them. These were just merely good activities or spiritual activities on a particular day, these were just external acts of humility, when really the rest of their lives were quite different.

I mean, imagine if this is how I functioned in my marriage. Imagine that in my marriage it was a total bargaining thing, where “I’m going to wash the dishes, you have to massage my feet,” or something like that. And that’s just how I function in my relationship with my wife. It would be frustrating. There would be pride in my life because sometimes I think that I do so much for her. Sometimes I would be on the verge of burnout because I can’t do enough, so I feel discouraged and I feel despair because I’m not doing as much as my wife.

Imagine that, if, in my marriage, I just treated my wife nicely on her birthday, our anniversary, and maybe mother’s day. And the other days of the year, 362 days of the year, I treated her like dirt. That would be terrible. All of us would say “That’s not what a marriage is supposed to be like. That’s dishonoring of the covenant that you made. That’s dishonoring to your wife.” And we would say “Yes, totally that’s not how a relationship with a human being works.”

And we do this so much in our relationship with God though. We dichotomize our lives and we think that “Well, if I just do these spiritual things, maybe the other parts of my life God doesn’t see or it doesn’t really matter to God.” The dichotomized life really reveals this lack of understanding of God’s character and also of the gospel: God does value, God does care about how we act in other scenarios, in private, in our works, in our homes. Those things matter; the way that we live matters.

In our merit system that we have with God, it really lacks the understanding of who God is- of His justice and His righteousness. We can never reach up to God’s justice and righteousness and yet we think that we can bargain with God in the little things that we do. That can either lead us to a false sense of security and pride, or it can lead us to frustrations, discouragement, and eventually maybe burnout.

And that’s where many of us unfortunately are. Many of us are either inordinately proud before God or facing burnout and wanting to just stop feeling guilty and just wanting to abandon it all. Many of us live dichotomized lives and we may show up to different church events and really in other areas of our lives, God would not be pleased.

I want to go ahead and continue reading.

## 2. Read Isaiah 58:6-7.

*6 “Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the straps of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?  
7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover him,  
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”*

So what God says is that this is the kind of fasting that God chooses and there’s an extensive list of examples here: freeing the wrongly imprisoned, lightening the burden of workers, setting free the oppressed, removing the chains of the bound, sharing food with the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, giving clothes to the needy, not hiding from our relatives who need help.

And this is obviously figurative, right? Because fasting is literally abstaining from food in order to be near God’s heart; feasting on the Word and feasting on Christ and his word for us and fellowshiping and communing with God in prayer in the spirit.

And what happens in those times is that we sit in our situations. We sit in it and it’s sometimes awkward and uncomfortable. But we sit in those situations and wrestle with our sinful hearts and we wrestle with the bad fruit that has come out. As we wrestle, as we feast on Christ and his word, we see God’s grace

through Christ. And as we see God's grace through Christ, we are reunited and reconciled with God and then we want to do what pleases God.

And so this is figurative because what the Lord is saying to the prophet is that this is fasting- this is what happens when you fast. Because God is all about fighting wickedness. God is all about freedom. God is all about sharing and generosity. God is all about helping others and bringing healing and change to the people closest to us. This is what we want to do because we want to please God when we fast. Let's go to verses 8-12, and I want us to notice the amazing effect of this kind of fasting with true faith.

### 3. Read Isaiah 58:8-12.

*8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up speedily;  
your righteousness shall go before you;  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'  
If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,  
10 if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,  
then shall your light rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be as the noonday.  
11 And the Lord will guide you continually  
and satisfy your desire in scorched places  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters do not fail.  
12 And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to dwell in.*

Wow- these are the effects of fasting with "true" faith in God and this list is amazing! It is the healing of wounds, propelling forward in the mission, being protected by God, experiencing answered prayers again and again, shining in the darkness, being guided by God, being strengthened and satisfied in heart, flourishing and thriving from within, repairing and rebuilding, and restoring of oneself and others. Man, this is an amazing picture and description of the people of God living out God's mission.

I've had a lot of conversations with the different leaders and volunteers of the New Hope Refugee Ministry (NHRM). You've heard from David last week in the mission's update and there are many refugees who are members in our church and who are serving in our church as well as in this refugee ministry. In our conversations, it is so clear that life is hard. It is hard to follow Jesus with a lot of opposition, question marks, and different sufferings and trials that they're facing. It is also unquestionable that in this ministry and other missional initiatives and ministries that we are involved with.

But in NHRM, it is so apparent that there is a propelling from God in moving forward in doing things that they never imagined to be doing right now. There's an abundance of answered prayers as they pray for funds, as they pray for a place to meet, as they pray for the salvation of people. They are seeing these prayers answered. They're shining in the darkness of a community where there are not that many believers in their home countries. Where there are persecutions, there's flourishing within, of the volunteers, servants, and founders of that ministry. Even though they're struggling there is a flourishing- definite restoring of lives and restoring of generations that God is doing. Praise God for that.

You see, through keeping justice and doing righteousness, which are expressions of our faith in Christ, we get to experience so much more of God in our lives. And we get to experience so much more of God's

grace within ourselves as well as in the lives of other people. This is the blessing, the benefit of living in obedience to God. It's not because we earn something from God. It is because we follow God himself, his heart, and his mission.

The reality is that we do slip into a "merit system" sometimes, isn't it? The reality is, we get proud or we get burned out. The reality is, we sometimes slip into dichotomizing our lives and having some pockets of our lives that are just for ourselves and maybe God would not be pleased with. This gets us to Isaiah 59.

#### 4. Read Isaiah 59:2 & 8.

*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.*

God reveals in verse 2 that Israel's problem is still sin: it's their sin, it's their inequities are their worst enemies that sabotage them from "keeping justice" and from "doing righteousness" the way that God intended for them to do, or in fact the way that they want to do.

In 59:3-7- following verse 2- we see another extensive list of social sins. Sins dealing with how they related with others, whether it's murder, lies, corruption, lawsuits, conspiracies, and violence. Now I want to read verse 8 for us:

*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.*

In other words, there is no way to make peace and justice on their own. Because they are just so "crooked" through and through their hearts and lives.

St. Augustine said that we- human beings- are curved into the earth. Martin Luther said that human beings are actually curved into themselves, and because we are curved into the earth, we are curved into our souls because of our sinful nature. There is no way that we can help ourselves or save ourselves. So, when you look at verses 9-14 of chapter 59, you see this. Human beings are blind and lost: spiritually blind, morally confused, hopelessly lost.

The second purpose of the Law- the first was to reveal the character of God- is to expose our sinfulness. Not just that we sin every once in a while, but that it is a part of our nature and we cannot save ourselves at all. This is huge, and this gives such great weight to accepting this is huge and gives weight to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross then.

So, we see here- this goes on to our next point- how God details the difference between "true" and "false" faith for us. This is what a lifestyle of just doing, keeping justice and doing righteousness can look like. It's people who are experiencing God's grace, and others are experiencing God's grace in such an amazing and awesome, and incredible way because we are following God. We are imitating his character.

But what about this problem of our sin? Which brings us to the next part: God's provision.

### III. God's Provision (59:9-21)

#### A. God explains his provision for his people to live out genuine faith.

##### 1. Read 59:16-17.

*16 He saw that there was no man,*

*and wondered that there was no one to intercede;  
then his own arm brought him salvation,  
and his righteousness upheld him.  
17 He put on righteousness as a breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for clothing,  
and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.*

My family visited this restaurant in Puncak. You may know where this is as I describe it. It's a restaurant with a very unusual theme of like military, army stuff. I was thinking when I was there, "Wow, this is not politically correct at all." Maybe because of such a growing negative, cynical sentiment towards the military and towards the police, and those kinds of things. But I was thinking, as I thought through this message, that actually this kind of exhibition of muscle and mind can actually be a good thing.

And that's what we've seen in verse 16-17. God looked around and he saw there was no human being to rescue his people. So, what he did that no other person, no other people to rescue them from their sins, one to rescue his people from their sins, spiritual blindness, and moral lostness.

So what God did, he stepped up. God stepped up by stepping into the mess himself. He put on his breastplate of righteousness. This is a primary character of God. He put on the helmet of salvation because it was his heart as he loved people, to save people from their sins and God stepped up and stepped into the world to fight on behalf of his people.

You see, God is committed to justice and righteousness because it's a primary characteristic of who he is; and this is a beautiful thing, this is a good thing. It is scary when we think about his justice and righteousness. But it is a good thing as well, and it's even better when we think about how much God loves us. And how God wants to give us his salvation.

If this was an action movie. This will be the montage where the hero gets prepped for battle, and he puts on his armor, and he takes his weapon, and collects them together in preparation to save whoever he is going to save.

## **2. Read 59:20.**

*20 "And a Redeemer will come to Zion,  
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the Lord.*

God declared that he would send a Redeemer to his people. That he would send a special "Servant", this servant of the Lord that would give himself as a substitute atoning sacrifice for their sins. He would be their "King" - who would rescue them from their transgressions. He would turn -change their hearts who would turn away from their sins, who would turn to God and follow, and love, and obey him.

The New Testament says like this in Colossians 2:13-15 (NLT): *13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. 14 He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.*

So we see from here, that even though we were dead on our sins, what Jesus Christ did by fighting for us, was he cut away the sinful nature, transplanted into us a new heart for him. He gave us new heart, he forgave us of our sins, he cancelled our death before God, and he went to the cross, and on the cross, he achieved the victory that we needed, that saves us from our sins, that changes our hearts, so now we would be God's people.

God's salvation is a gift to us, it is received by faith alone at no cost to us; but that doesn't mean that this gift of salvation is cheap. It was bought at a great price of our Redeemer's own life. Jesus went to the cross to redeem his people, and to make them into His children forever- and our faith receives the ongoing

power of Christ that works inside us. In other words, by God's grace alone, he sustains our faith through the works and words of Christ to "keep justice" and "do righteousness" more and more.

The key for his people to live out genuine faith is God's provision of himself! He sent the Redeemer to save us, sustain us, and to keep working change in us.

## **Life Application**

Now in light of God's command, "true" vs. "false" faith, and God's provision, here are the next steps to take for us in light of the "one thing," to strive for justice and righteousness as a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ. It's actually an internal process of coming before our Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

1. **Think about your current situations and/or relationships.** Sit down in the middle of them, even though it's uncomfortable, even though it's difficult and awkward.
2. **Examine your heart and the fruit that comes out of your life.** Even though sometimes it's difficult, even though sometimes it's heart breaking. We might want to avoid those things, but we need to wrestle with our hearts. We need to confront the bad fruit in our lives.
3. **Celebrate the victories and confess the failures.** We can celebrate those small wins in our lives, and big wins as God puts them in our lives, and then we confess our failures. So we celebrate victory, we confess our failures, we cling to Jesus by faith every day. That's the third step.
4. **Decide and do what please God by faith. Repeat.** We decide and then we do. We keep justice, we do righteousness and we do because we want to please God. We do by faith, not based on our feelings, not based on our performance, but by faith in Christ. And then we repeat.

There is a lifetime of opportunities that God will have us do this!

So recently, I was getting so frustrated with how lust was occupying so much of my desires and so much of my thoughts, and so I went through this process. I sat on my current situation, my current relationship side, I examined my heart, and I examined the bad fruit of my life. I celebrated some victories, because God has done a lot of work to change my heart in this area of my life. But I also confess my failures, and I could do nothing but cling to Christ in that moment. And I decided and I did what pleases God, and that's the cycle I'm repeating over and over again.

I was talking to another brother who was sharing how he was struggling just speaking gently with his children, and he as well was clinging to the Redeemer and he was going to that process, and he was trying to decide and do what pleases God by faith. He was going through that process.

For some of us, we are going to serve this year as leaders, some of us are going to serve as volunteers for the Church. Serving the church is tough, we make mistakes, and bring out the worst in us sometimes. We feel like hypocrites sometimes. Sometimes we get too proud, but what we do, we go through this process, we cling to our Redeemer and we strive to keep justice and do righteousness in our lives.

We don't quit, we keep holding on to Jesus. I pray that we will all strive for justice and righteousness as a reflection of our faith in Jesus Christ. We can go ahead and have a time of response of God's Word. God bless you.

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