

¹ The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; ² he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness. Isaiah 57:1-2

I often think of these first verses at the memorial service of a godly person. God knows when to take us home to spare us from some future calamity. He also knows how to keep us alive until we are prepared for that day. Some pastors prefer to officiate funerals rather than weddings because the hearts of those attending are more likely to hear the message and consider how short this life is (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

When the righteous, those who walk in their uprightness, graduate from this life, they are taken away from calamity. They enter peace that is so complete we cannot comprehend it now (Philippians 4:7). That is the reward for a life united with Christ. This chapter is presenting to us two very different paths. In these first two verses we have the path of the godly who have the righteousness of God through faith in the grace and mercy provided for us in Christ Jesus. The other is seeking satisfaction in something else, anything else. We could say it another way, - **God or idolatry.**

The chapter has started by telling us of the good end of the righteous person, but warning us that no one lays it to heart. What will be your epitaph? What will people say at your funeral? How did your life affect others? And more importantly, how does God view your life? Where will you spend eternity? Have you prepared for it? The Egyptians laid up treasures in the tombs of their kings, all of which now sit in museums. I've seen so many lives focused on wealth only to see it tear apart the family as it fights over the inheritance. If you had a revelation of the results of your life one month after your death... what difference would it make in your priorities today?

³ But you, draw near, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman. Isaiah 57:2 God invites those who do not take the death of the righteous to heart to draw near and hear Him. He calls them sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman. Over and over again the Bible refers to idolatry as unfaithfulness, adultery, or fornication. The reason is two-fold. God calls Himself the husband of His people (Isaiah 54:5). To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is to be unfaithful to Him. But the second reason is that most of the idolatry in Biblical times and today involves physical lust. Sensuality was a part of most pagan religions. We don't call it a religion today, but it is still seen as a source of satisfaction. Americans lay about four billion dollars on the altar of pornography each year. Sons of the adulterer is a spiritual reference to those who follow the path that leads to destruction (John 8:41-42). Their spiritual parent is lust of one kind or another.

God invites all who would abuse creation out of God's intended boundaries to draw near and hear His warning. The world sees this as harsh, but remember the opening verses. God is concerned about your eternal condition. **If He is to be true to His nature He must judge what is evil, destructive, and harmful. If He did not, He would not be holy or just.** God's harsh rebuke is to wake people from the stupor of lust to see where true

Commented [PW1]: Ecclesiastes 7:2 (ESV)

² It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.

Commented [PW2]: Philippians 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Commented [PW3]: Isaiah 54:5 (ESV)

⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.

Commented [PW4]: John 8:41-42 (ESV)

⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.

satisfaction and eternal peace is really found. We are lied to day in and day out by advertising, educators, politicians, and our old nature. That is why God must use these drastic terms (Isaiah 55:2).

⁴ Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit, Isaiah 57:4 On a rare occasion I will look at comments to a news article. There was one article about the extremely low percentage of Christians among the Syrian refugees that were already given asylum in the U.S. In the article, an official for an NGO that worked for religious freedom stated that the refugees come from UN camps, but most UN camps are infiltrated by Jihadists. Comments on the article suggested we should accept Christian refugees in a greater number because they are non-violent. But one commenter went on and on about how stupid Christians are. He cited the number of stars discovered as proof that God didn't exist. He mocked Christians and all who believe in God. I would guess that he was suggesting that no religious asylum seekers be allowed into the U.S., and that we'd be better off as a nation of atheists.

Against whom was he opening his mouth wide and sticking out his tongue? What motivated him to be so anti-god? Was he not the offspring of deceit? I have one simple question for those who take his perspective. Where do they think that multitude of stars came from (Psalm 19:1)? Nothing? And if the answer would be that it always was, then simple physics says all mass would have long since slowed to a steady state. Instead we see the universe expanding with increasing speed.

I'm sure you could share many illustrations of your own of those who mock people of faith. The evidence for a Creator has never been more abundant and clear than in our day, but the anti-god rhetoric never so extreme. The major premises of evolution have been debunked. There is no such thing as a simple cell. There are no missing links. Yet, we go on indoctrinating each new generation.

⁵ you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? Isaiah 57:5 The motivation for much of the railing against God and those who believe in Him or any moral standard comes for the most part from those who seek satisfaction in what God has forbidden. And why has He forbidden it? Because He knows it is harmful, an abuse of His perfect design. His prohibitions are words of concern and love (Deuteronomy 10:13).

This verse describes the common ways to practice idolatry at the time Isaiah was writing. Even today in eastern nations, people attach spiritual significance to old trees. The slaughter of children is worldwide (Jeremiah 19:4). Who are the most innocent among us, if not the unborn? Babies were offered to red, hot heated arms of an image called Molech. He was supposed to give them fertile crops in return. Besides, it was one less mouth to feed. Abortions today promise a similar financial benefit and convenience.

⁶ Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I relent for these things? Isaiah 57:6 While living in Japan, I would sometimes walk

Commented [PW5]: Isaiah 55:2 (ESV)

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

Commented [PW6]: Psalm 19:1 (ESV)

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Commented [PW7]: Deuteronomy 10:13 (ESV)

¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

Commented [PW8]: Jeremiah 19:4 (ESV)

⁴ Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the blood of innocents,

mountain trails and come across smooth granite stones. There would be offerings in front of them as if a spirit of some kind inhabited them and could do something for the one who offered the gift. I never saw the stone consume the cups of sake or eat the bowls of rice which are the equivalent of grain and drink offerings. The Jews knew better, but did it anyway. We know better. But do we look to things we know can't see, feel, hear, or think? Do we make offerings of wealth to what cannot satisfy?

⁷ On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice. Isaiah 57:7 The high places were where people thought the gods would hear them. "Set your bed" is another reference to God seeing idolatry as spiritual adultery. James tells us that adultery is friendship with the world. *⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?* James 4:4-5 The "world" that James is referring to is the fallen nature of man in a fallen planet who crave everything other than a relationship with God our Creator (1John 2:15-17).

God yearns for our spirits to wake up from the stupor of self-indulgence and see that the greatness of His love is the only thing that will satisfy our hearts (Ephesians 3:18-19). If you are not in a love relationship with Jesus that affects your entire life, you are seeking satisfaction in this world. God is jealous for you. He doesn't want you to settle for something far less, that in the end will be harmful for you. He wants you to know the greatness of His love and the wonder of what He has planned for those who love Him in return (1Corinthians 2:9).

⁸ Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness. Isaiah 57:8 Spiritual adultery used to take place in secret in America. Now people are proud of it. They don't hide it behind closed doors (Jeremiah 6:15). They boast of it. Some of the most perverted forms are still done in secret. Jared of Subway advertising fame just received a fifteen year sentence for child pornography. But how long will our culture find that abhorrent when we refuse to define right or wrong by any objective standard?

⁹ You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol. Isaiah 57:9 If we can't find what satisfies in this culture we go to another. How many journey to Thailand for some pleasure they would be looked down on here? They sent down even to hell! Some people realize that there is a spiritual realm, and if they can't get the thrill they want from their perception of god, they will literally turn to hell to find it. They'll try anything and everything but God.

¹⁰ You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless"; you found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint. Isaiah 57:10 Sin will make you weary. But the hard heart of man will encourage itself that just a little more,

Commented [PW9]: 1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Commented [PW10]: Ephesians 3:18-19 (ESV)

¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Commented [PW11]: 1 Corinthians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

Commented [PW12]: Jeremiah 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD.

somewhere else, in some other person, object, some other drug, some other experience their soul will find satisfaction it craves. They find new life for their strength and go on searching experience after experience only to find increasing destruction to their body and mind (Ephesians 4:19). The last line says the result of renewed strength is that they were not faint. It could be translated "were not sick." We ought to be sick of some of the depravity man turns to, but man can overcome that natural disgust.

¹¹ Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me? Isaiah 57:11 The captors of the Jews would demand they worship their gods, but they did so before they were taken into captivity. God asks if someone threatened them to turn from God? Why would they lie or forget God? Why wouldn't we remember the warnings of God? Is it because His justice hasn't swiftly dealt with us. Do we think we won't be held accountable? Is that why we have no fear of God? Sinful indulgence often borders on the edge of insanity. Why would politicians throw away their positions for an affair? Have we forgotten the promise that our sins will find us out (Numbers 32:23)?

¹² I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you. Isaiah 57:12 Jesus said there will be those on the Day of Judgment who declare all they did for the Lord, but He will tell them to depart from Him (Mathew 7:21-23). He never was their source of satisfaction. They never responded to His call to them (Isaiah 1:18). They never turned from their pursuit of the world. Their good deeds won't save them. It's not about good deeds. It's about our relationship with our Creator.

¹³ When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain. Isaiah 57:13 In this verse the two paths come to their destination. If we have chosen something other than God to save us, we can cry out to it as we watch it vanish away. Our hope will be gone. Its temporal satisfaction will be exposed as meaningless (1 John 2:17). On the other hand, those who took refuge in the suffering Servant, the Messiah, Christ Jesus, who bore our sins, will inherit the kingdom of God. That is God's holy mountain. They will have their share in the heavenly land, like the Jews each had a plot of land in Israel (John 14:2).

¹⁴ And it shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way." Isaiah 57:14 I explained that the harsh rhetoric comes from a heart of love that would wake us and turn us from a path to destruction. Here again we see God's passionate desire for any who will choose Him over the world. Isaiah tells us that God will prepare the way for us to come to Him. That is the grace that convicts us of sin and opens our eyes to the meaninglessness of trying to find satisfaction in this world. But He also asks us to prepare the way for Him to come to us. That was the message of John the Baptist, to repent and get ready to meet Him (Luke 3:4). So as He prepares the way for us to come to Him, and by His grace we prepare our hearts to receive Him. Our hearts are broken for our past rejection of Him and seeking pleasure in the abuse of His created things that were meant for our good (Isaiah 40:3; 62:10).

Commented [PW13]: Ephesians 4:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

Commented [PW14]: Numbers 32:23 (ESV)

²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.

Commented [PW15]: Matthew 7:21-23 (ESV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

Commented [PW16]: Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Commented [PW17]: 1 John 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Commented [PW18]: John 14:2 (ESV)

² In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

Commented [PW19]: Luke 3:4 (ESV)

⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Commented [PW20]: Isaiah 40:3 (ESV)

³ A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Commented [PW21]: Isaiah 62:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway; clear it of stones; lift up a signal over the peoples.

¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Isaiah 57:15 God's self-description tells why reality is what He has described in this chapter. He is holy. That means He will not tolerate sinfulness. His just nature demands that He deal with it. He is so pure that He is said to dwell in a high and holy place. It is much higher than the mountains on which the idolaters worship. It is higher than this created universe. But the great wonder is that He is also with the contrite and lowly in spirit (Psalm 34:18). How can that be? Their repentance has prepared the way for Him and they have chosen the path He leveled for them (Isaiah 66:2). We meet in the loving embrace of forgiveness made possible by Jesus' sacrificial death in our place on the cross (Hebrews 10:14). When we find there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, our lowly spirits are revived (Romans 8:1). The heart of the contrite is revived. We have peace with God. We are His and He is ours (Song of Songs 2:16). The work He has begun He will complete (Philippians 1:6).

¹⁶ For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made. Isaiah 57:16 This passage told the captives that God was going to end their captivity and restore them to the land. But it speaks of something much more universal. If God did not provide salvation for us in Jesus, no human would survive. We would all be delivered to judgment. But God made a way. Jesus declared, "I am the way!" (John 14:6).

¹⁷ Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, Isaiah 57:17-18 Even when God dealt with Israel and Judah, they insisted on continuing in injustice and idolatry. Even into captivity, the people had hard hearts. But God would still have mercy and restore them to the Land of Promise. He would comfort them. And He will comfort all who come to Him for mercy.

¹⁹ creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD, "and I will heal him. Isaiah 57:19 This mercy and comfort results in the fruit of the lips that the author of Hebrews says is praise (Hebrews 13:15). God longs to be at peace with us. You see, sin is actually to set yourself in battle against the Lord. It is to join those in rebellion against Him. He longs to be at peace even with the worst of rebels. That is why He prepares the way for us to return as He did with Paul.

Those far and near is quoted in Ephesians 2:17. It is there interpreted by the Apostle Paul to mean Gentile and Jew. God will heal every sin sick soul that will meet Him on that path He has prepared for us. The end of the road for those who choose Him is peace.

²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹ There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isaiah 57:19-20 Those who refuse the path prepared for them and insist on going their own way will

Commented [PW22]: Psalm 34:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Commented [PW23]: Isaiah 66:2 (ESV)

² All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Commented [PW24]: Hebrews 10:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Commented [PW25]: Romans 8:1 (ESV)

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Commented [PW26]: Song of Songs 2:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ My beloved is mine, and I am his; he grazes among the lilies.

Commented [PW27]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [PW28]: John 14:6 (ESV)

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Commented [PW29]: Hebrews 13:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Commented [PW30]: Ephesians 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

find their life in constant turmoil, muddled by the confusion and chaos resulting from sin. They can't be still, for they deplore their own emptiness. They cannot know peace.

God's descriptions are very clear. **Which of these paths are you on? It should be obvious. You know peace or you don't.** If you don't, you can know it by turning from the path you are on and choosing the one God has prepared for you. Let go of trying to find something of creation that will satisfy. Acknowledge that in trying to do so you have been at war with God who loves you (Isaiah 50:8). Prepare the way for Him to take over your heart by repenting of those choices you have made in the past that only hurt you and others. Welcome Jesus as your Savior and experience the forgiveness He is ready to pour over you. **Know Jesus, know peace. No Jesus, no peace.**

Commented [PW31]: Isaiah 50:8 (ESV)

⁸ He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

Questions

- 1 What should we consider when a righteous person dies?
- 2 Why does God use such harsh language?
- 3 Why do people hate the idea of God?
- 4 What are some of today's idolatrous practices?
- 5 What is spiritual adultery?
- 6 Contrast two forms of renewing your strength?
- 7 Why would we ignore God's warnings?
- 8 Where does each path end?
- 9 Who prepares a way for whom?
- 10 Where does God dwell?
- 11 Who has peace?