



## Isaiah 59:1-8

(1) Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear. (2) But your iniquities have separated  
you from your God;  
your sins have hidden his face from you,  
so that he will not hear. (3) For your hands are stained with blood,  
your fingers with guilt.  
Your lips have spoken lies,  
and your tongue mutters wicked things. (4) No one calls for justice;  
no one pleads his case with integrity.  
They rely on empty arguments and speak lies;  
they conceive trouble and give birth to evil. (5) They hatch the eggs of vipers  
and spin a spider's web.  
Whoever eats their eggs will die,  
and when one is broken, an adder is hatched. (6) Their cobwebs are useless for  
clothing;  
they cannot cover themselves with what they make.  
Their deeds are evil deeds,  
and acts of violence are in their hands. (7) Their feet rush into sin;  
they are swift to shed innocent blood.  
Their thoughts are evil thoughts;  
ruin and destruction mark their ways. (8) The way of peace they do not know;  
there is no justice in their paths.  
They have turned them into crooked roads;  
no one who walks in them will know peace.

*New International Version*

Isaiah 59 portrays an entire culture in collapse. What is reported there took place about 120 years before Judah's devastation by Nebuchadnezzar's armies in 605 BC. Until being conquered, Judah was still holding together as a nation, so the chapter provides insight into what the self-centered leadership was producing on a more day-to-day

basis. In the first eight verses, Isaiah lists Judah's immoral activities.

This passage appears like a report from [God](#) through Isaiah on how He sees the collective cultural chaos produced as each citizen's sinfulness contributed to the wickedness of all who were living in Judah at that time. It is delivered as though God is a prosecuting attorney presenting his case before a court for judgment. After reading such a condemning report, one can only wonder whether any more than a mere handful of citizens were actually obeying God! In the same way, we can confidently judge from the news reports we hear daily in the media that the quality of life in the United States is approaching the same condition.

Notice how the *Revised English Bible* renders the first three verses:

The LOORD'S arm is not too short to save nor His ear too dull to hear; rather, it is your iniquities that raise a barrier between you and your God; it is your sins that veil His face, so that He does not hear. Your hands are stained with blood and your fingers with crime; your lips speak lies and your tongues utter injustice.

The people are indeed suffering from the chaotic immorality that surrounds them, and some are truly appealing to God to bring it to a merciful end. They have prayed and fasted about the situation, but God did not react. He provided no answers. He effected no changes. He did not raise up righteous and dutiful shepherds to provide good guidance and instill peace. Indeed, it seemed as if He had not even heard! Or if He had heard, He seemed not to have enough time or strength to do anything to bring the agonies of this kind of life to an end. Why?

Verses 2-3 contains the answer: Surprise, surprise—the very people appealing to God to end the crisis in their communities were guilty of committing the same sins that were responsible for intensifying the crisis. Despite crying out to God, they were not repenting of their own sins! In the meantime, God is waiting for the beginning of a truly sincere and substantial change led by the people crying out to God. He wants them to begin obeying His Word and restoring justice in all their doings.

We can apply this to the ever-worsening situation in the United States. Many people in this nation still hold sincerely to a substantially correct understanding of God and His purposes for mankind. They understand to some degree where the present immorality can lead. Because they fear what is coming and are suffering some degree of misery due to the nation's spiritual decline, they are probably praying about these things.

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Isaiah 59:1-8 (<http://www.theberean.org>)

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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