

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 26, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicaleLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Welcome back, everybody, to another Deep Dive, and today we're going to be looking at Isaiah chapters 54 and 55. Wonderful. Yeah, we're going to be looking at these two chapters, just kind of going through them.

We have some excerpts from a Bible study that was done by Dr. John Oswalt. Okay. So we're using those to kind of guide us through the text a little bit.

Look at that. Yeah, these are really interesting chapters full of, you know, a lot about grace and redemption and God's love. Yeah, and you know what's really striking to me is how these chapters pick up on the themes that we see developing through Isaiah and particularly on the heels of chapter 53.

Right. The suffering servant and now the, you know, we're moving from this anticipation of deliverance. Yes.

To the invitation to experience the reality of that deliverance. It's almost like a movement, you know, in a symphony. Yes.

Where it's like, okay, now we're moving on to a different section. Yeah. You know, we've had these chapters that have been talking about, you know, the coming, you know, anticipation of this coming deliverer.

And now we're to the point where it's like, okay, experience this. And one of the ways that Isaiah wants to convey this is through the imagery of barrenness to fruitfulness. Okay.

And so you have Zion, the picture that's being used here is Zion as a barren widow. Wow. And so you have this image of, you know, hopelessness in terms of children for her.

And then you have this fear of elimination that the Israelites would have had because you have God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars. And yet. They're dwindling down.

Yeah, they're exiled. And it looks like that promise is going to fail. Right.

But then God comes in, in chapter 54, verse 1, and says, you're going to have more children than one who's married. More. Yes.

Oh, wow. So this idea that even in your barrenness, I'm going to bring about fruitfulness. And, you know, it's interesting because that theme of, you know, being afraid of elimination.

Right. Is something that I think is prevalent in the world today. Oh, absolutely.

Where it's like, I mean, whether you're talking about people who are afraid of a certain race being eliminated or a certain group or, you know, even sometimes people will say, you know, well, Christianity is dying out in the U.S., and it's like, well. Right. You know, and it's that same kind of fear.

And I think this is a really good passage to kind of combat that fear and say, look. Yeah. Even when things seem impossible.

Yeah. You know, there's that God specializes in taking something that seems impossible. Absolutely.

And bringing life from it. He does. And bringing fruitfulness from it.

Yeah. He's in the business of resurrection. Yes.

Of taking that which is dead and bringing it back to life. That's so good. And, you know, and then he doesn't just stop with that, you know, the physical reversal of their situation.

He also wants to address the emotional side of this too because they would carry with them the deep shame. Yes. Of exile.

And it's important for us to remember that in the Old Testament, shame was really connected to the idea of your God failing you. Right. So to be exiled was to experience the ultimate betrayal.

Right. Like he couldn't even take care of us. Yeah.

Right. Right. And so he comes in, and he says in chapter 54, verse 4, you will forget the shame of your youth and of your widowhood.

Oh, wow. And so it's this idea that not only am I going to restore you physically. Yes.

But I'm going to heal you emotionally. I'm going to deal with the shame. I'm going to wipe away that sense of humiliation and pain that you've endured.

And I'm going to be with you. I'm not going to leave you. I'm going to take care of you, and I'm going to provide for you.

And to kind of underscore that, he goes on and in verse 5, he reveals himself using five different names or titles. Oh, wow. And it's as if he's trying to give them and us a glimpse into his heart.

And so he's called the Maker. Okay. He's the one who is intimately acquainted with our origins and our purpose.

Wow. He's the Lord Almighty Yahweh Sabbath, the undefeated warrior. Yes.

Who offers his people protection and security. So it's not just that he made us, but he's powerful enough to protect us as well. Yes.

And he cares enough to do it. He does. He also calls himself the husband.

And this is a beautiful picture of a covenant relationship, a relationship of love and commitment. Which is so different than the picture that a lot of people have of God as this vengeful, angry kind of God who's always looking to condemn us for every little infraction. Yes.

He doesn't want to condemn us. Instead, he wants to be in this close, intimate relationship with his people. I love that.

Yes. It's a beautiful picture. Then he's also the Redeemer.

Okay. The one who's obligated to rescue and restore us. And then finally, he's the Holy One of Israel.

The Holy One of Israel. This is a title that is unique to the God of the Bible. Right.

And it speaks to his transcendence. Yes. He is beyond our comprehension.

So big. So big. And yet at the same time, he's imminently present in our lives.

So involved in our lives. He is. And so these five names, I think, really reveal the depth of his love and commitment.

It's mind-blowing that the God who created the universe, who flung the stars into space, knows my name. And cares for you and wants to be in relationship with you. Yes.

And that kind of leads us into this idea of his anger and his love and these two seemingly conflicting things. Yes. It can be a difficult passage to kind of wrestle with in verses 7 and 8. Right.

When he talks about, you know, my anger was for a moment, but my steadfast love endures forever. How do you reconcile those two? Well, I think that Dr. Oswalt's insight here is really helpful. He said, God gets angry, but he is love.

Oh, wow. And so it's this idea that God's anger isn't arbitrary or vindictive. Right.

But rather it's a reaction to our rebellion. It's almost like a parent's anger. Yes, like a parent with a child.

When you see your kid doing something stupid. Yeah. You get angry because you love them.

Exactly. Because you see the consequences that are going to come from their actions. And so it's not that God is, you know, this angry, vengeful God, but it's he's a loving father.

Right. Who is angry at the sin because he sees how it destroys his children. That makes me think of Psalm 30, verse 5. His anger is, but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime.

Weaving may tarry for the night, but joy comes in the morning. Yeah. It's a good reminder that, you know, even when we do experience God's discipline.

Yes. His love is still there. His love never fails.

And his grace will prevail. Yes, it will. And speaking of, you know, that kind of hope he goes on to offer them in verse 10, a covenant of peace.

Shalom. Shalom. Yeah.

You know, and a lot of times we think about peace as just the absence of conflict. Right. But shalom is so much more than that.

It is. It's this wholeness, this well-being. It's complete reconciliation with God.

And with ourselves. With ourselves and with others. Yeah.

So it's a much bigger concept than just the absence of war. And we see this concept of a covenant of peace offered throughout the Old Testament. Oh, absolutely.

In Numbers, chapter 25. Yes. Phinehas receives a covenant of peace.

Because of his radical obedience and his zeal for God's holiness. So it's not just that he was doing things right, but he was passionate about it. Yes.

And then you see it in Ezekiel as well. Yes. Both chapters 34 and 37, God promises to make a covenant of peace with the Israelites.

And this is after... After their exile. After their long exile. Yeah.

So this idea that he's going to restore them and that they can have security because of this covenant of peace. And ultimately, I mean, that covenant of peace finds its fulfillment in Jesus. Yes.

In the New Testament, in Romans 5.1, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. That changes everything. It does.

Knowing that we have peace with God. Right. That we're no longer separated from him because of our sin.

And that frees us to experience the fullness of his love and grace. And that takes us to this beautiful picture of precious stones that we see in verses 11 and 12. Oh, yes.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem with all these sapphires and the agate and carbuncles and all this imagery. Which represents... Which represents the beauty and the enduring nature of God's people. It's like he's saying, look how valuable you are to me.

You're worth investing in. Yes, I'm going to rebuild you with the most precious materials. Yes.

Because you're that important to me. Yeah. And that's a message that I think a lot of people need to hear today.

Oh, absolutely. Especially those who struggle with feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness. Yeah.

You know, we live in a world that tells us we're not enough. Yes. But God sees us as precious.

Yeah. Beautiful. And he's committed to restoring and rebuilding our lives with his love and grace.

And rebuilding us not just in terms of our circumstances. Yes. But also in terms of being established in righteousness.

Yes. As Isaiah says in verse 13 and 14. Yes.

This is a concept that really sparked a lot of debate during the Reformation with Martin Luther and John Wesley. Talk about that a little bit. Yeah.

So Luther championed this idea of imputed righteousness. Okay. Where we are declared righteous by God through our faith in Christ regardless of our actions.

Got it. And so it's this idea that we are given a clean slate, a new identity based on Christ's perfect righteousness. And Wesley, while agreeing with the importance of imputed righteousness.

Right. He also emphasized imparted righteousness. Okay.

Where we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to actually live righteously. So not just that we're declared righteous, but we actually become. Yes.

We become more and more like Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions. So it's not just a label, but it's an actual transformation. It is.

Yeah. And I think that Dr. Oswalt makes the point that both of these are essential. Yes.

That we need to be declared righteous by God through Christ. Right. But we also need to be transformed by his Spirit so that our lives actually reflect that righteousness.

So it's not about earning God's favor. No. It's about allowing his grace to work in us and through us.

And I think it's a good question for all of us to ask ourselves. Yes. You know, am I relying solely on being declared righteous, or am I actively seeking to become more like Christ? In the way I live.

In the way I live. And that leads us really well into chapter 55. Okay.

Where God extends this amazing invitation. To abundance. To abundance.

And I think it's important to note that this is coming right on the heels of this picture of exile. Right. Where they would have been experiencing poverty and slavery.

Yes. So when God says, come all you who are thirsty, come and buy wine and milk without money and without cost. It's a beautiful picture.

It would have spoken to their hearts. It would. And it speaks to our hearts as well.

I mean, we all experience a sense of, you know, poverty. Right. Maybe not physical poverty.

Emotional poverty. Emotional poverty. Spiritual poverty.

Relational poverty. All of those things. And God's offering of abundance isn't just about meeting our physical needs.

Right. It's about meeting all of our needs. Your deepest longings.

Yes. You know, he desires to satisfy those. Yeah.

And then there's the sense of urgency. Right. In verse six, where he says, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he is near. And I love that Dr. Oswalt told that story about Aaron Burr. Oh, yeah.

You know, where Aaron Burr heard a powerful sermon. Yeah, at a revival. At a revival.

And felt that conviction. And rejected it, and then never felt that conviction again. Yeah.

He said, I'll seek the Lord some other time. Wow. But that time never came.

Wow. That's a sobering thought. It is.

And it makes me wonder if we miss those God moments. You know, those times when he's drawing near to us. Yeah.

Do those invitations eventually fade away? That's a good question to ponder. Yeah. So what does it mean to seek God? I mean, is it just about spending hours in prayer and Bible study? You know, I think those things can be part of it.

Right. But I believe it goes deeper than that. It's about aligning our hearts with God's will.

Okay. About pursuing a relationship with him above all else. Right.

It's about acknowledging our need for him. Yes. Recognizing that we can't do life on our own.

Right. And actively seeking his guidance and presence in every aspect of our lives. It's like that old hymn, I need thee every hour.

Exactly. We need him every hour. We are needy people.

And recognizing that neediness, I think, is the key to unlocking God's power. Yeah. And experiencing his fullness.

So good. I think that's a good place for us to maybe pause and reflect for today. Right.

What stood out to you from what we've discussed so far? Well, I think that... What are you wrestling with? I think this whole idea of God's anger and his love is really something that I'm still kind of processing. Yeah. Because I tend to think of God as this loving God.

Right. And so when I encounter passages that talk about his anger, it's kind of jarring to me. Yeah.

But I appreciate Dr. Oswalt's insight that God gets angry, but he is love. Right. And so it's this idea that his anger is rooted in his love for us.

Yeah. And that it's not this arbitrary or vindictive thing. Right.

But it's a reaction to our rebellion and the consequences that come from that. Yeah. So I'm still processing that, but I think it's a really helpful insight.

Yeah. It's a really helpful insight. What about you? I think for me, what really stands out is this idea of shalom.

And I think for so long, I had such a shallow understanding of what shalom meant. Right. I thought it just meant peace, like the absence of conflict.

Right. But it's so much more than that. It is.

It's this wholeness, this well-being. It's this complete reconciliation with God, with ourselves, and with others. And it's something that we can experience now.

Yeah. It's not just something that we're waiting for in the future. Right.

But it's something that we can have in Christ. Yes. And so that's really encouraging to me.

Yeah. And I think that's a really good takeaway for our listeners today. Absolutely.

Is to just think about, what does shalom mean to you? Yes. And how can you experience that in your life today? How can you be a conduit of that shalom? Yes. To the world around you.

Exactly. Yeah. So we're going to pause here for today.

When we come back next time, we're going to be continuing our look at Isaiah 54 and 55. Looking forward to it. Yeah.

This is good stuff. All right, everybody. Thanks for listening.

And we'll see you next time. Bye. One of the things that really resonated with me from our last conversation is this contrast between our human way of thinking and God's infinite wisdom.

Right. And Isaiah highlights that in verses 8 and 9. Of chapter 55. Of chapter 55.

Yeah. Yeah. For my thoughts are not your thoughts.

Neither are your ways. My ways declares the Lord. Right.

It's like we're trying to navigate with a rowboat. Yeah. And God's got the whole map.

He sees the whole landscape. Yeah. He sees everything laid out.

And yet we try to figure it out. Yes, we do. On our own.

With our limited understanding. With our limited understanding and our logic. Yeah.

And we try to earn God's favor. Yes. Instead of just receiving it.

Instead of receiving it as a gift. Yeah. It's so humbling.

It is. To think that, you know, surrender is not a weakness. Right.

It's actually the key. It's the key to unlocking the fullness of God's plan for our lives. Yeah.

It's like, it's the paradox. It is. Of the Christian life.

That the more we surrender control, the more freedom we experience. The more freedom we experience. So how do we practically apply that? Well, I think for me it starts with acknowledging my limitations.

Okay. Recognizing that I don't have all the answers. That my perspective is limited.

Right. And humbling myself before God and saying, I trust in your wisdom even when I don't understand. I think it's also remembering that, you know, our perspective is very limited.

Yes. Very limited. You know, we're bound by time.

Yes. And God's perspective is eternal. He sees the whole tapestry.

Yeah. It's like we've got, you know, one page of the book. Yes.

And God's holding the whole volume. Exactly. Yeah.

So remembering that can free us from a lot of anxiety and fear. It can. You know, it can help us to rest in God's sovereignty.

Trusting that he's working everything out for our good. Yeah. Even when we don't see the immediate results.

Yes. And one of the things that really stands out to me in Isaiah 55. Yeah.

Is this idea of the power of God's word. Yes. And he uses this beautiful imagery.

In verses 10 and 11. 10 and 11. Of the rain and snow falling from heaven, watering the earth, causing it to bring forth life.

And it's so powerful because it's like, you know, just as rain and snow are essential for physical life. Right. God's word is essential for our spiritual life.

Yes. It nourishes our souls. Yes.

It challenges our thinking. It guides our steps. And I love that it's not just.

Yeah. You know, a collection of ancient stories or moral teachings. Right.

It's a living and active force. It is. You know, it can change us.

It can transform us from the inside out. Yes. And remember that story that Dr. Oswald told about Louie Zamparini? Oh, yes.

The Olympic runner. Yes. Who was a prisoner of war.

During World War II. Yeah. And experienced horrific things.

Yes, he did. Yeah. Came home.

Deeply traumatized. Yeah. So broken.

Broken. And yet his life was completely transformed. After hearing the gospel.

After hearing the gospel preached at a Billy Graham crusade. Wow. What a powerful testimony.

I love it. The power of God's word to heal. Yes.

And to redeem and to restore. To bring hope to the most hopeless situations. So what are some practical ways that we can make God's word a more integral part of our lives? Well, you know, for me it starts with carving out time each day to read and meditate on scripture.

Yeah. It doesn't have to be hours on end. Right.

But even just a few verses. A chapter. A psalm.

Yeah. A psalm. Anything just to get into the word.

Just to get into the word. And I've found that memorizing scripture is a really helpful way. Oh, me too.

To hide God's word in my heart. Absolutely. You know, so that I can recall it.

Yeah. When I need it. During those challenging times.

Yes. Or to encourage others. Yes.

And also, don't underestimate the power of community. Oh, yes. You know, being in a Bible study.

Yeah. Or having conversations with other believers. Yes.

About what you're learning. It helps to solidify those truths in our hearts. Yes.

And to encourage one another. Absolutely. We're not meant to do this journey alone.

No. We need each other. We need each other.

And as we immerse ourselves in God's word. Yes. And allow it to transform our lives.

We become living testaments. Yes. To his power and grace.

We become those signs that Isaiah talks about. Yes. You know, those reflections of God's reality in a world that so desperately needs to see him.

It's not about putting on a show. No. Or trying to be perfect.

Right. It's about allowing God's character to shine through us. Yes.

In authentic and genuine ways. Yeah. It's about being kind to a stranger.

Yes. Forgiving someone who's wronged us. Offering a helping hand to someone in need.

Yeah. Speaking words of encouragement and hope. Yes.

Even when the world around us is filled with negativity and despair. And that takes us back to that image of transformation in Isaiah 55.32. Where even nature is celebrating. Yes.

The mountains and hills burst into song. The trees are clapping their hands. All creation rejoices.

As God's people go forth in joy and peace. It's a beautiful picture. It's a beautiful picture.

Of the ripple effect of our redemption. Yeah. How our transformation can impact the world around us.

It's contagious. It is. Yeah.

It makes you wonder how much we're actually doing that. You know, how often are we hoarding God's blessings? No. Instead of letting them overflow to others.

Instead of being conduits of his grace to the world around us. Yeah. So, as we wrap up this second part of our deep dive.

Okay. I want to leave you with this question. What does it look like for you to be a sign of God's reality in your own unique context? What are some practical, everyday ways?

Yes. That you can reflect his love. Yeah.

His grace. His truth. To those around you.

To those around you. It's like we've been handed this treasure map. Yeah.

You know, that leads to a life of abundance and joy and peace. Yeah. But we're trying to keep it to ourselves.

Right. We want to hoard it. Yeah.

Instead of sharing it with the world. It's like, no, no, no. There's enough for everyone.

There's plenty to go around. Come on. Let's go on this adventure together.

Yeah. You know, we weren't redeemed just to sit in a holy huddle and feel good about ourselves. Right.

You know, we were redeemed to be agents of change. Yes. To be ambassadors of reconciliation.

Right. To be living proof of God's transformative power. Yeah.

So, how do we practically live that out? Right. Well, I think it involves taking risks. Okay.

You know, stepping out of our comfort zones. Okay. Being willing to get our hands dirty.

Yeah. You know, in the messiness of life. Yeah.

It might mean serving at a local soup kitchen. Yeah. Mentoring a young person.

Right. Starting a difficult conversation with a neighbor. Okay.

Or simply being a listening ear to a friend who's going through a tough time. So, just being sensitive to what's going on around us. Yes.

Being sensitive to the needs around us. Yeah. And then being obedient.

Yes. Listening to those nudges from the Holy Spirit. Right.

And being willing to say yes, even when it feels scary or inconvenient. Yeah. Because I think a lot of times we miss those opportunities.

We do. Because we're afraid. We're afraid.

We're uncomfortable. Yeah. We don't want to get out of our comfort zone.

But you know, when we do step out in faith. Yeah. When we allow God's love to flow through us to others.

We discover that being a sign of God's reality isn't just a duty or an obligation. It's a privilege. It is.

A source of deep joy and fulfillment. And it's in those moments. Yeah.

When we're living out our faith in tangible ways that we become the most compelling evidence of God's existence. Yes. Not through arguments or debates.

Right. But through the transformative power. Right.

Of a life surrendered to his grace. Well said. It's the most beautiful and authentic apologetic we can offer.

And as we do that. Yeah. As we allow God's grace to shape our thoughts, our words, our actions.

We become part of that grand redemptive story. Yes. That Isaiah is painting.

It's the story of God. Yeah. Making all things new.

Yes. It's a story that started back in Genesis with a garden. And it culminates in Revelation with a city, a new heaven, and a new earth.

Wow. Where God's presence dwells fully and forever. And we get to be a part of it.

We get to participate in that story. We're part of that restoration. And so on that note, dear listeners, we've reached the end of our deep dive into Isaiah 54 and 55.

Yeah. We hope you've been inspired and challenged by the richness of these chapters. May you go forth with a renewed sense of purpose and passion.

Embracing God's grace. Seeking his guidance. And being a radiant sign of his love and power in the world.

Until next time, happy diving. Bye, everyone.