

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 28, Audio Overview Podcast

BiblicalLearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Okay, so righteousness, what is it really? And why does it seem so hard to actually live it out? That's what we're going to be looking at today, diving into Isaiah chapters 58 and 59 to see if we can get a little bit more clarity on this whole idea of true righteousness. And I think the notes that you shared from this lecture by Dr. John Oswalt on the book of Isaiah will be a really good place to start. Absolutely.

Yeah. It's fascinating stuff. He really gets to the heart of what it means to live a life that's pleasing to God.

And he doesn't shy away from the challenges that we all face. Right from the get-go, Isaiah 58 kind of throws us the curveball. We see the Israelites outwardly seeking God, going through all the motions.

They're fasting, they're praying, but their hearts don't seem to be in it. It's almost like they're checking things off a list. Going through the motions, but not really grasping the heart of it.

Yeah. And that's what really stood out to me about Dr. Oswalt's point on their fasting. Yeah.

You know, it wasn't about genuine repentance or a desire to connect with God. It seemed more like a bargaining chip. You know? Like trying to manipulate God.

Yeah. Almost like, hey God, look, I'm doing all the right things, now you got to give me what I want. Exactly.

And that brings up this really interesting concept of mishpat. Mishpat. Yeah.

It's a Hebrew word that goes way beyond just legal justice. It's about God's divine order for all of life. So it's not just about following the rules.

It's about reflecting God's character. Yes. It's about living in a way that's in harmony with God's desires.

And that's where the hypocrisy of the Israelites really becomes apparent. They're fasting, which should be about humbling yourself, seeking God's will, but at the same time they're mistreating their workers. Wow.

Totally contradicting the whole idea of mishpat. It's like they're missing the point completely, aren't they? It really makes you wonder, you know? How often do we do the same thing? Totally. Focusing on the outward appearance of righteousness, but neglecting the deeper issues of the heart.

Like, we can get so caught up in doing the right things, saying the right things, that we forget to actually examine our motives. Yeah. It's like we're fooling ourselves, thinking we've got it all together, while ignoring the things that really matter to God.

That makes me think about what true fasting, or true righteousness, really looks like in our own lives. Right. Like, what are we holding onto that's preventing us from reflecting God's character? What are the selfish desires, the hidden prejudices, the things that are blocking God's love from flowing through us? So true fasting, true righteousness, it's not about deprivation.

It's about making space for God to work in our lives. It's about letting go of our self-centeredness, and allowing God to transform our hearts. So that our actions naturally flow from a place of love and justice.

Yeah. It's about aligning our lives with God's desires. Okay.

So, we're starting to see that this whole idea of achieving true righteousness, it's a lot more complex than we might have initially thought. Definitely. But then, Isaiah 59 takes this concept of human righteousness and, yeah.

It pulls no punches. It does not pull any punches. It paints this incredibly bleak picture of our ability to actually achieve it on our own.

Yeah. It gets real, real fast. It gets real, yeah.

There's no sugarcoating here. Right. Isaiah lays it all out.

Describing our hands as defiled, our lips speaking lies, our thoughts consumed with wickedness. It's like he's holding up a mirror and saying, look, this is the reality. He's not trying to make us feel good.

He's trying to wake us up. Yeah. And it's not a pretty picture, is it? No, it's not.

But, you know, it's important that we see it. We need to understand the depth of our brokenness, our attempts at righteousness apart from God. They're like flimsy spider webs.

They just fall apart. We can try and try and try to be good, but ultimately we need help. Yeah.

We can't achieve true righteousness on our own. And that's the key, recognizing our need for God. That's where true hope begins.

But before we jump into that, I'm curious. Yeah. What's your biggest takeaway from this section? What stands out to you about this struggle for true righteousness? I think what hits me the hardest is how easily we can fool ourselves.

You know, we can go through all the motions, say all the right things, but deep down our motives might be totally off base. Yeah. It's like Isaiah is saying, don't even bother trying to hide it.

I see right through you. Yeah. He's not afraid to call us out on our BS.

No, he's not. But the good news is he doesn't leave us hanging there. Right.

Right in the middle of all this doom and gloom in Isaiah 59, there's this sudden shift, like a glimmer of hope breaking through. It's like just when we're about to give up on humanity. Yeah.

God steps in. And not just steps in. He enters the scene as a warrior ready to fight for justice.

Yeah. Verse 15 says, the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. And then bam, he's ready to take action.

It's like this epic showdown is about to go down. Yeah. And this isn't just any warrior.

He's wearing righteousness as armor. He is the embodiment of everything humanity has failed to be. So it's not just about God fixing things for us.

It's about him offering us something we could never achieve on our own. Right. True righteousness given to us as a gift.

Okay. Now this is where my mind starts to get blown a little bit. Yeah.

Because Dr. Oswalt makes this connection between the warrior Messiah here and the suffering servant we see in Isaiah 53. It's like two sides of the same coin. It is, right.

The Messiah conquers our sin and also heals us from its effects. Okay. So on one hand, you've got this powerful warrior image conquering evil, bringing justice.

But then you've also got the suffering servant bearing our burdens, offering forgiveness. How do those two ideas fit together? Well, think of it this way. We're so messed up by sin that we need someone to conquer it for us.

That's the warrior Messiah. But we're also so broken and wounded that we need someone to heal us. That's the suffering servant.

So it's a complete rescue mission. God's not just putting a Band-Aid on the problem. He's transforming us from the inside out.

He's dealing with both the cause and the effects of our sin. Okay. That makes a lot of sense.

It's all made possible through the Messiah who bridges the gap between our brokenness and God's perfect righteousness. And this is what I love about all of this. We're not just passive recipients in this whole process.

Isaiah 60.1, it starts with this call to arise, shine, because the Messiah's light has come, and now we get to reflect his glory. It's like an invitation to participate in the transformation, to partner with God in bringing his righteousness into the world. So it's not just about being declared righteous.

It's about actually becoming righteous. And that requires our active participation. Okay.

So then if this Messiah is the key to achieving true righteousness, where do we even begin? What are the practical steps we can take to embrace this transformation? I mean, it feels like a pretty daunting task. You know, how do we even begin to grasp this kind of transformation? Is it about trying harder, being more good, following all the rules? It actually starts with something much simpler, but maybe even harder in a way. Repentance.

Repentance. Okay. So like acknowledging we've messed up and turning back to God.

Yeah, but it's deeper than just feeling sorry for our mistakes. It's a total change of heart. Turning away from trying to do it all ourselves, you know, relying on our own strength and instead turning towards God's grace.

It's admitting we can't do this on our own and surrendering to his transforming power. It makes me think about what Dr. Oswald said about surrendering our needs to God. Yes.

It's about trusting that he knows what's best for us, even when it's hard. Right. Letting go of control, letting God take the wheel, even when we don't know where he's taking us.

So it's not about achieving moral perfection then. No. It's more about aligning ourselves with God's will.

Exactly. Letting his grace shape us. And that's where the freedom comes in, right? Absolutely.

We're not striving for God's approval anymore. We can rest knowing we're already loved and accepted through the Messiah and from that place of security and grace. We can start to live out true righteousness.

Not as a burden, but as a response to his love. Yeah. It becomes a natural outflow of our transformed hearts.

This has been such an incredible journey through these chapters of Isaiah. It's powerful stuff. It is.

You know, we started by looking at this problem of hypocrisy, right? Outward actions versus inner transformation. Yeah. The gap between what we do and who we are.

And then we saw how, on our own, we just can't achieve true righteousness. Right. But then, bam, the Messiah enters the scene.

Our warrior, our suffering servant. He offers us a way out. A way to be made right.

And the key to all of this is repentance. Turning away from ourselves. Turning towards God's grace.

So I guess as we wrap up, the question I'm left with is, what does genuine repentance look like in my life? Yeah. That's the question we all have to wrestle with. How can I arise, shine? Like Isaiah 60 says.

And you know, the beautiful thing is, we don't have to figure it out on our own. Right. God is with us every step of the way, guiding us, giving us grace, transforming us.

Yeah. That's a great reminder. Thanks for joining me on this deep dive.

My pleasure. I hope everyone listening is leaving with some new insights and maybe a desire to dig deeper into these chapters themselves. I think there's always more to discover.

Yeah. Absolutely. And maybe we'll even uncover even more together down the road.

I'm looking forward to it. Thanks again. You're welcome.