

ISAIAH, PART 2 (COMFORT FOR HIS PEOPLE)
PROGRAM 29 (#911144)
WEEK 6 (#911329) (Guest Teacher David Arthur)
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SERIES: Isaiah, Part 2 (Comfort For His People)

**TITLE: Program 29 – Peace To Him Who Is Far And Near
(Guest Teacher David Arthur)**

THURSDAY

INTRO

Kay: Don't you love this portion of Isaiah? Comfort ye, comfort ye My people. I have been so comforted to have a man that come along side me and teach with me precepts for life and have the audience be blessed. Enjoy our son David Arthur. He has a Masters in Theological Studies from Reformed Seminary and he is a man who loves the Word and loves teaching you.

OPEN

David: If given the option to be completely in control of your life, absolute sovereign control, all details placed in your hand and under your authority, would you take it? Honestly? Would you really want to rest in your own power, in your own strength to run your life? We're gonna see today what happens when man decides to be his own god, to take his own destiny into his own hands making himself: supreme authority.

PART ONE

David: Hi. My name is David Arthur and I'm so glad you're here with me today to study God's Word, to see what He has to say about: What does it mean when we decide not to follow Him? We have some really strict warnings here in Isaiah 57. He sums it up at the end of the chapter in verse 21. He makes it very clear, **“‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked.’” (Isaiah 57:21)** Seem harsh to you? Does it seem like God has drawn the line too severely in there is no peace for the wicked? Let's look and see how He describes the wicked and how He describes what they're up to in chapter 57. It actually begins in chapter 56, verse 9. Hear what He says. **“All you beasts of the field, all you beasts in the forest, come to eat.” (Isaiah 56:9)** Here He gives an open invitation to the beasts to come and devour these whom He describes. Verse 10: **“His watchmen...,”** speaking of Israel, **“[His watchmen] are blind, all of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark, dreamers lying down, who love to slumber; and the dogs are greedy, they are not satisfied. And they are shepherds who have no understanding; they have all turned to their own way, each one to his unjust gain, to the last one. ‘Come,’ they say, ‘Let us get wine, and let us drink heavily of strong drink; and tomorrow will be like today, only more so.’” (Isaiah 56:10-12)** What is He saying here about these people? Well did you note there in verse 11 how He described them? He says, **“...They have all turned to their own way....” (Isaiah 56:11)** Interesting, isn't it? In chapter 53, verse 6, He says, **“All of us...have turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused...iniquity of us all...,” (Isaiah 53:6)** there describing us as sheep who have wandered away, have gone astray. But here He is using the pronoun “they”. He's making a distinction. They have gone astray. Well how have they gone astray? Well it goes on in 57 to tell us. It says in verse 3, **“...you sons of a sorceress, offspring of an adulterer and a prostitute. Against whom do you jest? [And] against whom do you open [your] wide your mouth and**

stick out your tongue? Are you not children of rebellion, offspring of deceit?” (Isaiah 57:3-4) Now in verse 5 He tells us their activities, what they’re about. Here’s the first one. **“Who inflame yourselves among the oaks, under every luxuriant tree....” (Isaiah 57:5)** Here we have the connotation of sex being used as a form of worship. Sex used as worship; what does that mean? We study the religions of this time when Isaiah was written and we find out that the pagan religions would require the people to come to their temple or their house of worship, and they would engage in lewd activity and sexual activity in order to stimulate what they thought were the gods above watching them. You see they thought it was their role to somehow manipulate or to stimulate the various gods up in the heavens above them and then those gods would then mimic what man was doing down in the worship house. They would begin to have relations up there and the result, the fruit of it would be fertility in the women here on earth. The result would be fertility in their crops. They would have bountiful crops that season. Isn’t that backwards? Somehow I can’t understand how we would think that somehow it’s my job to manipulate my “deity”, those whom I claim to be my god to do things that would then benefit me. If you think about that rationally for a moment it seems to flip the roles. It seems to make God man, and man god. So that the one that’s really in charge is man. Let’s go on to see what else. In 57, verse 5, it says “under the oaks there you were,” but He says, **“...Who slaughter the children in the ravines, under the clefts of the crags?” (Isaiah 57:5)** What does this mean “slaughter the children”? They had a practice that they would do ah, it’s later referred to here in Molech, but they would have a practice that they would do and they would build this this statue a little bit larger than a man, and he would be a straight-standing statue with his two arms coming out from his body in a ninety degree angle at his waist. And then below the hands would be a basin of which they would then build a fire. And these people, in order to please or appease the gods above that they worshiped, they would take their own children and they would, as a form of worship, place their children in the

arms of this pagan, demonic god, Molech, and they would watch their children burn to death. Now this wasn't done because some ruler had come along and said: "Listen, I'm a crazy dictator. This is what we're gonna do. If you're gonna follow me you have to slaughter your children." No, this was something that they believed in, that they willingly engaged in. They thought "If I would sacrifice one of my children then Molech, in return, his part of the transaction would be to give me back many more sons." That's syncretism. That's blending religions. And what happens is when you blend a religion with something demonic all of it becomes tainted. I wonder if they realized at the end of the day that they were, they were slaughtering their children, that they were taking humans and placing them literally in the hands of a pagan deity and sacrificing them and slaughtering them. It goes on in verse 6 to tell us some other activities of the wicked. Verse 6 says, **"Among the smooth stones of the ravine is your portion, they are your lot; even to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have made a grain offering. Shall I relent concerning these things?" (Isaiah 57:6)**

Now these smooth stones that are referred to here in the text are these phallic symbols, these symbols of sexual organs that they would build all over their city. You see their culture had become consumed with this pagan worship so that worship became a place of sexual pleasure. It became a place of sacrificing your children, of somehow trying to to stimulate or manipulate the gods above. And here in verse 6 it says: ["You bring your drink offerings, your grain offerings, and you lay them out before these statues of sexual organs"]. (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 57:6) This is the extent of what happens when the people of God begin to bring in ideas of worship from their surrounding culture and try to blend it in with the worship of Yahweh. That wasn't strange to those around them. To those around them, multiple gods was the norm. "Sure you can have Yahweh. You can bring Yahweh into the mix. Sure! We can build a whole bunch of deities around here." But what we've read all throughout Isaiah up to this point is: God demands exclusive, exclusive, sole rights to your life. He says over and over again, ["I

am God and there is no other besides Me.”] (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 45:5)
So we have the people, it goes on in verse 7, it says that, **“Upon a high and lofty mountain you have made your bed. You also went up there to offer sacrifice. Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your sign; indeed, far removed from Me, you have uncovered yourself, and have gone up and made your bed wide. And you have made an agreement for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on their manhood.”** (Isaiah 57:7-8) And here we have adultery and promiscuity being described. When it says they have made their “bed wide,” what He’s saying is is is they have opened up to anyone. It is no longer that my bed is just for me and my spouse, a holy place, set apart just for us. But now my bed is open wide like the bed of a prostitute. And He said, **“...you have loved their bed, you have looked [up]on their manhood.”** (Isaiah 57:8) And verse 9, **“You have journeyed to the king with oil and increased your perfumes; you have sent your envoys a great distance and made them go down to Sheol.”** (Isaiah 57:9) Here they’re seeking the help of foreign kings. This is often what Israel would do when they got in trouble instead of going to God, they would go to those things which were around them. They’re simply doing what their neighbors would do. I mean you can see. And they’re sitting on their front porch of their little house there in Israel and they’re saying, “Hey, what do you do when you’re in a tough circumstance?” These people begin to adopt the ways of the world around them. And the ways of the world around them were horrible. They thought of life as something to be used in a deal, in a transaction, that it was much the way in what modern world thinks about abortion. I don’t want to have a baby now. It’s just inconvenient. I’m working on my career. I’ll end this life now. Or they would see their sexuality to be something to be distributed among whomever they wished, and whenever they wished. The world around them had infiltrated the hearts and the minds of the people. And it says, [For the wicked there is no peace.] (PARAPHRASE Isaiah 57:21) Is that harsh? Is that unfair? God has already told us in His text here in Isaiah

that [His ways are simply not our ways, that His thoughts are simply not our thoughts]. (PARAPHRASE, Isaiah 55:8) And so if we are going to be included into His people, if we are going to join ourselves to Him that literally means we must forsake those ways, that we must set them aside and walk away from them, rejecting their call to our lives. We must look at them for what they really are. I mean, let's examine it. This is a mentality that says I am in control of my destiny, that I'm even in control of those things of which I worship. And yes, though I bow the knee, in reality, My Friend, is it not true that they were gods unto themselves? There is no peace for the wicked, for those who decide to reject God and His authority.

PART TWO

David: Welcome back. I'm glad you're joining me in this study of Isaiah, understanding who God really is and His perspective on those who wish to join Him to be His people. If you'd like more help I invite you to go to preceptsforlife.com. There you'll find a free download. It's a study guide designed to enhance your study of this text as you study along with us here at "Precepts for Life". Also, I would love it if you would let us know how's it working for you, if you would give us some feedback and let us know; or suggestions. Please feel free to communicate with us. Now let's look as we continue in chapter 57 in verse 11. He says this, **"Of whom were you worried and fearful when you lied, and did not remember Me nor give Me a thought? Was I not silent even for a long time so you do not fear Me?"** God says then, **"I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you."** (Isaiah 57:11-12) That's how He finishes up that aspect of who the wicked are. When you add it up it comes out to be a negative, to be a zero. But look at verse 13. Thirteen kind of wraps it up for us. **"When you cry out..."** He says, **"...let your collection of idols deliver you...."** (Isaiah 57:13) In other words, if you're gonna follow this way of living, if you're gonna allow the world to determine who you're gonna

worship, He says then when you cry out, don't cry to Me. Cry to those things that you want to worship. **"...Cry out, [to]...your collection of idols....,"** and in verse 13 **"...let them deliver you...."** But He says this is what will happen, **"...The wind will carry all of them up, and a breath will take them away...."** (Isaiah 57:13) My Friend, this is true wisdom from God. He's saying "Look, just evaluate what you're investing in. Evaluate how you're making your decisions and what you're deciding to give your loyalty, your affection, your devotion to and just compare it to Me." ["The wind" He says, "will take those collections of idols".] (PARAPHRASE Isaiah 57:13) I mean, can't you see it's kind of like a little thing on a shelf. This little collection of idols, is this what you're gonna cry out to? 'Cause if you are, when the wind comes, when the storms and the trials of life come, it will simply blow them away. But then He gives us hope. At the end of verse 13 He says this: **"...But he who takes refuge in Me will inherit the land and will possess My holy mountain."** (Isaiah 57:13) There it is, a hope of promise. But instead in contrast, **"...he who takes [his] refuge in Me....,"** He says, I will place them in My land. I will place them in **"...My holy mountain....,"** (Isaiah 57:13) and give them possession. Now verses 14 to the end of the chapter give us hope for this way that is being built for His people. It gives us hope for those who will follow God. It says in verse 14, **"...Build up, [and] prepare the way, remove every obstacle out of the way of My people. For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, 'I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'"** (Isaiah 57:14-15) He who dwells in the highest of the heavens is willing to stoop down to the lowest of the low. He who sits on the throne of the universe is willing to step off and to come to you one on one and meet you in your lowly spirit, to minister to the contrite. And He says [I want you to build up. I want you to prepare a way.] (PARAPHRASE Isaiah 57:14) That reminds of chapter 40, the opening paragraph of chapter 40 of this

building this highway of which the comfort of the Lord will come. Build up the highway, prepare the way and remove the obstacles. (See Isaiah 40:1, 3 & 57:14) He then says in verse 16, **“For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry....” (Isaiah 57:16)** There there He’s saying “Listen, there’s gonna come an end to My discipline and My wrath on My people.” He goes on to describe it and He says, **“Because....,”** in verse 17, **“...of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and [I] struck him; I hid My face and was angry, and he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.” (Isaiah 57:17)** In My discipline, God is saying. Now God doesn’t lose His temper. God is not like us where He flares up, but God in His wrath pursued them. They kept turning on their way. They kept running from Him. But verse 18 has these words to say, **“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him....” (Isaiah 57:18)** I’ve seen where he’s going. I’ve sent the path of destruction that he has decided to place his life upon. I’ve seen Israel as they have run from My covenants and My promises and My precepts and My provision and My protection. I’ve seen them run from My grasp, **“...but I will heal him....”** Look what it says in 18. **“...I will lead him and restore comfort to him and to his mourners.” (Isaiah 57:18)** Well what would that look like? It’s like a child running away from you, and you know the further they run the more danger they’ll get into. They’re running in such a way that they’re gonna crash or hurt themselves and you’re calling out to them to stop. But unlike us and our children we are sometimes unable to make them stop. But here we have this sovereign God who is able to do anything. And He says, **“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and...comfort....” (Isaiah 57:18)** “I will restore him. I will bring him back and I will bring him and lead him to restoration.” Now what does that look like? In verse 19 it tells us. I will be, **“Creating....,”** He says, **“...the praise of the lips....” (Isaiah 57:19)** I love that. “Creating”; creating is something that God does. Only God can create. It’s something where He takes nothing and He makes something. He takes something that doesn’t exist and He makes something that does exist. What’s He creating here in

verse 19? He says I'm **"Creating the praise of [his] lips...."** (Isaiah 57:19) That reminds of the chapters we've already looked at where He told the people to shout or to sing for joy, O barren ones. (See Isaiah 54:1) You see God's restoration is literally gonna create praise on the lips of His people. Why? Because He has healed them. He has restored them. He has made them His own. And look what He says. **"...Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,' says the LORD, 'and I will heal him.' But the wicked are like the tossing sea, for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up refuse and mud. [And] 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked.'"** (Isaiah 57:19-21) Did you notice how He describes those whom He will bring peace? Verse 19, **"...To him who is far and to him who is near...."** (Isaiah 57:19) My friend, we now know because we have the entire Word of God now in our hands, and we can go look and see what the end of the story is. And I invite you to go sometime to the book of Ephesians in chapter 2. And there what Paul is doing for us, he's describing how those who were once far off, those who were removed will be brought back to Him. It says in Ephesians 2, that it is through the blood of Jesus Christ. The suffering servant of Isaiah 53, the Messiah, the One promised, the One who will come and lead His people back to His Father, back to the heavenly Father in their covenants, in the covenant of peace, and restoration was done through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as He was pinned to that tree on Calvary. Though He knew no sin and though He'd never done anything wrong He made a sacrifice once and for all, a sacrifice of His own body, His own blood and His own righteousness. And this, according to Isaiah, Isaiah says this, **"...[It is] peace to him who is far and to him who is near...."** (Isaiah 57:19) Peace; it's "shalom". It's God's intended position and place. It's His presence with His people. Peace is brought for those who are far away to you who may be near. Do you know His peace?