

57:15 “One of the finest one-sentence summations of biblical theology in the Bible....Muilenburg goes so far as to say that the whole NT provides a running commentary on the theme of this verse” (Oswalt 1998: 487).

57:15 “His will and desire is “to revive” the contrite, those who have their spirits crushed by someone stronger. Earlier God’s will was to revive the life of the servant who was crushed for our iniquities in 53:5” (Smith 2009: 564).

57:16 “That he can here state that his anger will abate and will not be eternal is a witness to the fact that a sin offering has been made and that justice has been satisfied with regard to human sin (cf. Isa. 53:10–12). The only issue remaining is whether humans will haughtily continue to insist that they either do not need such a sin offering, or that they can take care of their problems in a better way through their efforts than in God’s way” (Oswalt 1998: 489).

57:18 “God will restore comfort to those in Israel who are crushed and broken for their own sins and those of the nation (cf. 61:2–3; 66:10). Any others need expect nothing but trouble” (Oswalt 1998: 490).

57:21 “Their lives will be like the *driven sea*, which even on the calmest day is in constant motion, its waves constantly throwing up on the shore the wreckage from its depths...the sea is unable to be still. So it is with us humans who choose our ways over God’s. Stillness is not in us, and we cannot produce it no matter how hard we try. Peace is only to be found when we give ourselves away to the will and ways of the one who is beyond change” (Oswalt 1998: 492).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What type of spiritual leadership should you put yourself under?

What are the modern equivalents of the adultery-idolatry described here that God hates in the church today?

What does “contrite” mean? What are the characteristics of one who is “contrite”? Do these describe you? If not, what steps should you take?

ISAIAH 57: THE WICKED AND THE CONTRITE

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 40-66

- III. The Holy One of Israel is sovereign over the restoration and salvation of his people (40:1–66:24).
 - A. The Holy One of Israel vindicates his glory over idols by predicting the restoration of his people from Babylon (40:1–48:22).
 - B. The Servant of the Lord will suffer to save his people (49:1–55:13).
 - C. The Holy One of Israel will return blessing to the righteous and retribution to the evil (56:1–59:21).
 - 1. The Lord will reward the righteous and expose the wicked (56:1–57:21).
 - a) Invitation to worship the Lord extended to eunuchs and foreigners (56:1-8).
 - b) Judgment decreed for the leaders and the people (56:9–57:13).**
 - c) Restoration promised to those who are contrite (57:14-21).**
 - 2. The Lord will recognize those righteous in heart (58:1–59:21).
 - D. The Holy One of Israel will restore his people to a glorious new home (60:1–66:24).

OUTLINE OF ISAIAH 56:9-57:21

- I. Judgment decreed for the leaders and the people (56:9–57:13).
 - A. The shepherds have failed to lead the people in righteousness (56:9-12).
 - B. The righteous are taken away to be spared judgment (57:1-2).
 - C. The people are guilty of pursuing false gods (57:3-13a).
 - D. The one who trusts in the Lord will inherit the land (57:13b).
- II. Restoration promised to those who are contrite (57:14-21).
 - A. The Lord lives with the one who is contrite (57:14-15).
 - B. The Lord forgives the one who mourns (57:16-19).
 - C. The Lord judges those who remain in wickedness (57:20-21)

NOTES

57:1 “Evil has become so rampant in the society and its end is so near that God in his mercy is removing the righteous from it” (Oswalt 1998: 470-71).

57:3-13 “The author seems to put together in a “collection” (cf. v. 13) all the worst features of pagan religion. He speaks of its grosser fertility aspects (vv. 5a, 7-8), of its child sacrifice (v. 5b), of its animism (v. 6), and of its ceaseless demands (vv. 9-10). All of this sums up the end results of a religion of works, in which the worshiper by his or her performance tries to manipulate the world in order to secure its blessings” (Oswalt 1998: 475).

57:5 “He depicts the two facets of Canaanite religion that never ceased to horrify the prophets: fertility worship and child sacrifice. The precise reason for the association of the *lush tree* with the fertility cult is not known. Scholars usually mention the relative rarity of trees in Israel and the possible phallic symbolism. The ability of the tree to survive drought, storm, and the changing seasons must have been a factor as well. Perhaps the people felt that sexual activity in the shade (cf. Hos. 4:13) of such obviously fertile things would both partake of their fertility and add to it. But whatever the exact reasons were, the fact of the association is clear. Physical connection with the powers of creation rather than a spiritual relationship with the Creator becomes the key to power” (Oswalt 1998: 476-77).

57:5 “Those who set themselves aflame with desire in order to insure that desire is met will always mistake means and ends. For instance, godly children are the end (Mal. 2:15), and the means is sexual desire. But allow gratification of that desire to become the end, and the children that God has given will be sacrificed on every altar available as a means to the end” (Oswalt 1998: 477). Footnote: “Although the practice has become more subtle, it is no less prevalent today than it ever was. Every day children are sacrificed on the altars of greed, lust, achievement, and power just as surely as if they had been placed in the red-hot arms of Molech” (Oswalt 1998: 477n31).

57:5 “To the Israelite prophets, with their understanding of history and their sense that the future is always in thrall to the faithfulness of the present generation, the thought that people would destroy the next generation in order to gratify this generation’s lusts was intolerable” (Oswalt 1998: 477).

57:9-10 “The constant quest for new gods with which to prostitute oneself is exhausting; the way is very long. But an addiction has been created. Having refused the only one who can really satisfy, and having replaced him with the creation, an insatiable thirst has been aroused” (Oswalt 1998: 481).

57:12 “Thus today, out-and-out denial of biblical faith is rarely a problem. The problem is the prostitution of it. We mingle it with its sworn enemies to such a degree that it is nothing more than a shell of itself, and then we wonder why it has no power to move us and no stability to hold us. We call it righteousness, but it is really abomination (cf. 66:3)” (Oswalt 1998: 482).

57:12 “When the facts are revealed and the motivations of their hearts are exposed...God warns that all their righteous deeds and works, which they were counting on, will not profit them at all. This verse strongly argues against the popular beliefs of cultural Christians who naively think that God will be impressed with all their good works and that these will get them into heaven” (Smith 2009: 559).

57:13 “Those who abandon the false supports they have created for themselves in their attempts to conquer the world will discover to their surprise that they have been adopted by the owner of the world and that they have become heirs to it. This is surely the meaning of Jesus’ statement, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). The meek are those who have surrendered their power and their attempts to make the world serve them. The meek are those who have admitted they are not God, and who have thrown themselves beneath the protection of the one who is God” (Oswalt 1998: 483).