



ISAIAH 57

ISRAEL'S IDOLATRY ~ A PROMISE OF REVIVAL AND HEALING

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, 1). Upon the deaths of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences (v. 1, v. 2). 2). Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves (v. 3-12). 3). Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity and re-establish their prosperity (v. 13-21).

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Notes	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>Isaiah 57:1 The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity; ² he enters into peace; they rest in their beds who walk in their uprightness. ³ But you, draw near, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the loose woman. ⁴ Whom are you mocking? Against whom do you open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue? Are you not children of transgression, the offspring of deceit, ⁵ you who burn with lust among the oaks, under every green tree, who slaughter your children in the valleys, under the clefts of the rocks? ⁶ Among the smooth stones of the valley is your portion; they, they, are your lot; to them you have poured out a drink offering, you have brought a grain offering. Shall I relent for these things? ⁷ On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice. ⁸ Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, deserting me, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a 57:3 This is a vivid picture of those who practice idolatry. See James 4:4. b 57:5 See 2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6. c 57:7 Or “On high you set up your bed.” d 57:8 Or “(phallic) symbols.” 	<p>Israel's Idolatry</p> <p>Isaiah 57:1 The godly perish, but no one seems to notice. The faithful ones are taken away, and no one understands. It is because of evil that they are preserved from calamity, ² and the godly ones enter into peace, resting serenely upon their death beds. ³ “But you—come here, you son of a sorceress! You’re nothing but an offspring of an adulteress and a prostitute. a ⁴ Who do you think you’re mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Why, you’re a rebellious child, the offspring of liars! ⁵ You burn with lust for other gods among the oak groves and under every green tree. You sacrifice your own children in the caves b near the bed of a stream.” ⁶ From there you take smooth stones and worship them as idols. Yes, they become your idols! You bring them grain offerings and pour out wine as drink offerings. Do you think I will not seek vengeance for this? ⁷ On a high hill, you practice ritual sex c and go up to the lofty place to offer sacrifice. ⁸ Hidden inside your front doors you have set up your obscene idols. d Forsaking me, you went up and uncovered yourself and climbed into your wide bed. You made covenant with them for yourselves, you slept with them, and you gazed upon their nakedness.</p>

English Standard (ESV)	Passion Translation (TPT)	Passion Translation (TPT)
<p>⁹ You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol. ¹⁰ You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, “It is hopeless”; you found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint.</p> <p>¹¹ Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, did not lay it to heart? Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me? ¹² I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you. ¹³ When you cry out, let your collection of idols deliver you! The wind will carry them all off, a breath will take them away. But he who takes refuge in me shall possess the land and shall inherit my holy mountain.</p> <p>¹⁴ And it shall be said, “Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people’s way.” ¹⁵ For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite. ¹⁶ For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would grow faint before me, and the breath of life that I made. ¹⁷ Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry, I struck him; I hid my face and was angry, but he went on backsliding in the way of his own heart. ¹⁸ I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, ¹⁹ creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD, “and I will heal him. ²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt. ²¹ There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”</p>	<p>e 57:9 Or “to the (Canaanite god) Molech.”</p> <p>f 57:9 Or “to Sheol.”</p> <p>g 57:13 Or “spirit.”</p> <p>h 57:13 That is, Mount Zion. The believer today inherits the kingdom of God, the Zion-realm. See Ps. 37:9, 11; 69:35, 36; Isa. 49:8; Matt. 5:5; Heb. 12:22.</p> <p>i 57:15 The Hebrew word shakan (shekinah) means “to dwell or settle.” The implication is that God inhabits eternity, filling it with his glory.</p> <p>j 57:16 Or “continually striving with them.”</p> <p>k 57:18 This is the same Hebrew word found in 53:5. See Hos. 6:1–3.</p> <p>l 57:18 It is possible to see in this verse the progression of the worshiper from the outer court (healing), forward into the Holy Place, until we are drenched with God’s comforting presence in the Holy of Holies, where we release our language of praise.</p> <p>m 57:19 See Eph. 2:11–22.</p> <p>n 57:21 Or “well-being” or “prosperity.”</p>	<p>⁹ You journeyed to the king e with oil along with many perfumes. You sent your envoys to exotic lands, even down to the underworld. f ¹⁰ Though all your wanderings wearied you, you never said, ‘I give up.’ Your strength was renewed so that you did not faint.</p> <p>¹¹ “Why were you so afraid of them that you told lies and did not remember me or even cared what I thought? Is it because I have been patient and long silent that you no longer fear me? ¹² I will denounce your presumed ‘righteousness’ and your ‘good works,’ so don’t trust in your idols to help you. ¹³ Let’s see if your pantheon of idols can save you when you cry out! d “They will be blown away by the wind; g merely a breath will carry them off! But whoever makes me a hiding place will possess the land and inherit my holy mountain.” h</p> <p>A Promise of Revival and Healing</p> <p>¹⁴ Yahweh says, “Let the people return to me. Build! Build up the road, clear the way, and get it ready! Remove every obstacle from their path.”</p> <p>¹⁵ For this is what the high and majestic one says, the one who fills the eternal realm with glory, i whose name is Holy: “I dwell in high and holy places but also with the bruised and lowly in spirit, those who are humble and quick to repent. I dwell with them to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of those who are broken over their sin.</p> <p>¹⁶ You will not find me continually accusing them j or holding anger against them, lest they feel defeated and lose heart before me. For I am the One who gave the breath of life to my people. ¹⁷ It was their sin and greed that made me angry, so I struck them and hid my face from them. But they continued in rebellion, following their “own desires. ¹⁸ Even though I’ve seen their ways, I will heal them. k I will guide them forward and repay them with comfort, l giving mourners the language of praise.</p> <p>¹⁹ I offer peace to those who are far from me, and I offer peace to those who are near, m and I will heal their deepest wounds,” says Yahweh. ²⁰ “But the wicked are like the storm-tossed sea, whose restless waves are never still, stirring up mud and mire. ²¹ There is no peace n for the wicked,” says my God.</p>

Bible Knowledge Commentary

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- The Righteous to Die.

- 57:1-2. The society then was so bad that the righteous people in Israel (also called devout and those who walk uprightly) had to die in order to find peace. Observing the evil all around apparently frustrated them. They could do nothing to turn the nation back to the Lord. The only way the righteous could be spared from such frustration was to die.

- **Israel's Involvement in False Religions** (57:3-10).

- **57:3-4.** In contrast with the righteous people mentioned in verses 1-2, the rest of the Israelites were engaged in false religious practices picked up from pagans around them, including sorcery (see comments on 2:6) and religious prostitution (cf. Hosea 4:14). In fertility religions “worshippers” engaged in sexual relations with prostitutes, supposedly identifying in that way with gods and goddesses to help guarantee fertility in crops, animals, and families. Such people in Israel were mocking the righteous while they were involved in shameful deeds. By such actions they were rebels against God.
- **57:5-8.** Worship centers were set up on hillsides, probably so that the people could imagine themselves closer to their gods. Often such centers were in lush forest areas to picture the fertility being sought by the worshipers. Thus the people, as Isaiah wrote, would lust among the oaks (cf. 1:29). Sometimes the people were also involved in child sacrifice in attempts to appease the wrath of various gods (cf. Ezek. 20:31; Hosea 13:2). They were in the habit of giving offerings to their idols and sacrificing to foreign gods on the high hills where they also were involved in adultery (Isa. 57:6-7). Their homes were supposed to be centers of learning about the Lord, but the people had made them places of idol worship and adultery (v. 8). (Cf. the use of pagan symbols with God’s command in Deut. 6:9.) Beds and nakedness may refer to sexual perversity involved in such worship or they may symbolize idolatry (which was sometimes likened to spiritual adultery).
- **57:9-10.** The worship of Molech, an Ammonite god, was sometimes accompanied by child sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 32:35), but sending representatives to Ammon to worship their god sometimes resulted in death (you descended to the grave). Yet in the face of these difficulties the people still refused to give up their sinful ways. They simply renewed their strength and continued on in sin.

- **Israel's Forgetfulness of God.**

- **57:11-13.** Most of the Israelites had forgotten the true God, apparently because He had seemingly been silent. So in irony the Lord said He would expose their righteousness and ... works. Their alleged righteous works, when exposed, would be shown for what they really were, and as a result their deeds would be of no help to them before the Lord. When in trouble, God said sarcastically, they should cry out to their gods. But they would find that God will blow ... away their idols. In contrast those Israelites who trust the Lord will inherit the land (cf. Pss. 25:12-13; 37:9, 11, 22, 29; 69:35-36), that is, they will enjoy physical blessings, including the temple mount (God’s holy mountain; see comments on Isa. 11:9) again belonging to Israel.

- **The Lord's Promise of Forgiveness.**

- **57:14-21.** The exhortation to [Vol. 1, p. 1113] prepare a road for the people of faith recalls 40:3-5 which speaks of a road being prepared for the Lord. Now the faithful are walking to the Lord. Even though He is majestic (high and lofty; cf. 6:1), eternal, and holy (cf. 6:3), He fellowships (lives) with those who are contrite and lowly in spirit (cf. 66:2). His accusations and anger do not last forever, because of His grace. In the past He had to be harsh with His people because of their greed and independence. But when they repent He forgives them, giving healing, guidance, and comfort. The forgiven ones enjoy peace. ... but the wicked have no rest and no peace (cf. 48:22). They are doomed for punishment because they refuse to turn to the Lord.

TONIGHT'S DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the last 17 chapters of Isaiah, we have seen a lot of hope for release and restoration. The first two verses of Chapter 57 are about the peace that comes to those who live righteous lives. Then, Isaiah takes a step back and focuses on the behavior of God's people that led them into captivity in Babylon. Look at verses 3 thru 13 again. Have you ever walked in idolatry even close to what's described here? Think about the thing in your life that you've done that you consider to be as far away from righteousness as possible. Not even close! So, what do you do with all this? How can you use this information to take you deeper in your relationship with Jesus?
2. The rest of the questions tonight will focus on our openness to God's forgiveness. Why do you think God might be so drawn to humility, contrition and those who are "lowly in spirit?"
3. In verse 14, Isaiah talks about the removal of the obstacles from his people's paths. What obstacles have you seen the Lord remove from your path? What is the one obstacle that remains in your life that you really want the Lord to remove?
4. In verse 16, God says, "You will not find me continually accusing them or holding anger against them, lest they feel defeated and lose heart before me. For I am the One who gave the breath of life to my people." What is "the breath of life" God gave to his people? How would your life change if you were to receive "the breath of life" from the Lord?