

When We Lose Sight of Our God

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Key Scripture

Isaiah 59:1-2 (ESV) Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear.

Sermon in One Sentence

When our focus shifts from God and His righteous standards, the consequences of sin create a profound separation, obscuring His presence and hindering our spiritual vitality.

Introduction

Have you ever experienced that chilling moment of panic when you realize you've lost sight of something precious? Perhaps a child in a crowded store, a vital document, or even your car keys when you're already running late. There's an immediate surge of adrenaline, a desperate searching, and a sinking feeling of dread. What if, I suggest, something far more precious, more foundational to our very being, can also be lost sight of – our God? Not that God moves, but that *our* gaze shifts, *our* attention wanes, and *our* understanding dims.

This isn't about God disappearing; it's about our spiritual vision becoming clouded, distorted, or even entirely averted. When we lose sight of God – His character, His commands, His promises – the landscape of our lives inevitably changes. We begin to navigate by our own dim light, stumbling in directions we were never meant to go. This morning, we turn to the prophet Isaiah, who, with piercing clarity, diagnoses a people afflicted with spiritual myopia, revealing the profound truth that when we lose sight of God, the separation isn't His doing, but ours.

Isaiah 59:1-2 offers a stark reminder that God remains ever-present, ever-powerful, and ever-attentive. The problem isn't with Him; the problem lies squarely with us when our lives become entangled with sin, creating a chasm that obstructs our view of His glorious face.

Historical & Biblical Context

The prophet Isaiah lived and ministered in Judah during the tumultuous 8th century B.C., a period marked by political instability, moral decay, and the looming threat of Assyrian invasion. Isaiah was called by God to confront a people who, despite having enjoyed generations of covenant relationship with Yahweh, had largely abandoned His ways. They maintained external forms of religion – temple worship, sacrifices – but their hearts were far from God. Their society was rife with injustice, oppression, and idolatry. Chapters 58 and 59 of Isaiah are a powerful indictment of Israel's hypocrisy and sin, juxtaposed with God's unwavering call for true righteousness and repentance.

Isaiah 59 specifically addresses the people's complaint that God wasn't hearing them or intervening on their behalf. They felt abandoned, questioning God's power and presence. Isaiah's masterful response here, however, turns the mirror back on them. He assures them that God hasn't changed – His power to save and His ability to hear remain undiminished. The true issue isn't God's capacity, but their spiritual condition. This historical context highlights a timeless truth: when we perceive God as distant or unresponsive, the first place we ought to look for the cause is often within ourselves, examining our own faithfulness and obedience.

Main Point I — The Unchanging Character of Our God

Scripture: Isaiah 59:1a Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;

When we lose sight of God, it's easy to project our human limitations onto Him. We might begin to think He's too busy, too weak, or simply uninterested in our struggles. But Isaiah forcefully debunks this misconception. The very first phrase, "Behold," calls for urgent attention. Look! God hasn't changed. His "hand is not shortened, that it cannot save." This speaks to His infinite power and boundless capacity to intervene, to deliver, to rescue. There is no challenge too great, no sin too deep, no circumstance too dire for His mighty hand to grasp and transform. He is the same God who parted the Red Sea, brought down Jericho's walls, and raised the dead.

Nor is His "ear dull, that it cannot hear." This addresses God's attentiveness and responsiveness. He is not deaf to our cries, our prayers, our deepest longings. The God of the universe bends His ear to listen to the whisper of His children. He is perfectly capable of hearing every petition, every sigh, every cry for help. The problem, therefore, is never on God's end. He remains eternally powerful, eternally present, and eternally willing to engage with His creation. Our perception of His absence or inaction often stems from a fundamental misunderstanding, or a willful ignorance, of who He truly is.

Main Point II — The Separating Power of Sin

Scripture: Isaiah 59:2a but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,

Having established God's unchanging character, Isaiah immediately pivots to the stark reality of the human condition: "but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God." This is the foundational problem when we lose sight of God. It's not that God chose to distance Himself; it's that our sin creates the chasm. The Hebrew word for "iniquities" (■■■■■■■■■■, *avonot*) speaks of perversity, guilt, and twisting what is right. It refers to moral crookedness, a deviation from God's perfect standard. Every deliberate act of rebellion, every compromise with evil, every choice to pursue our own desires over God's will, widens this division.

This separation is not merely a geographical distance, but a relational, spiritual breach. Sin, by its very nature, is anti-God. It elevates self and dethrones the Creator. It defiles our communion with a holy God. When we embrace sin, we are walking away from His light, turning our backs on His presence, and actively constructing a barrier between ourselves and the very source of life and truth. The spiritual myopia that causes us to lose sight of God is a direct consequence of this accumulating wall of iniquity.

Main Point III — The Obscuring Veil of Sin

Scripture: Isaiah 59:2b and your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear.

The culmination of our iniquities is that "your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he does not hear." This is a profoundly poignant image. To "hide one's face" often indicates displeasure or alienation. It means God appears absent, His benevolent gaze withdrawn. It's not that God truly hides, but that the accumulation of *our* sin acts as a veil, obscuring our spiritual vision from perceiving His presence. Imagine trying to see the sun through a thick cloud cover; the sun hasn't moved, but our perspective is entirely obscured.

Furthermore, the consequence is that "he does not hear." This doesn't contradict Isaiah 59:1 where God's ear is not dull. Rather, it means that because of sin's barrier, our prayers do not effectively pierce through. They become tainted by unconfessed sin, selfish motives, or a lack of genuine repentance. God, being holy, cannot condone sin or endorse a relationship that refuses to acknowledge His authority. Therefore, our cries become unheard because the spiritual connection is severed, not because God is deaf, but because our unrighteousness has created an impenetrable wall between us and Him. Losing sight of God, then, is directly linked to the choices we make and the sins we harbor.

Illustration

Consider the story of the prodigal son from Luke 15. The younger son, convinced he knew better and wanted more than his father's house could offer, demanded his inheritance and journeyed to a distant country. He didn't physically lose sight of his father – he consciously turned his back and walked away. In that distant land, squandering his wealth on riotous living, he quickly lost sight of *who* his father was: a provider, a protector, a loving guide. He lost sight of the values, the security, and the identity he possessed as a son. His iniquities – his selfishness, his rebellion, his wasteful living – created not just a physical separation, but a complete spiritual and relational chasm. He didn't see his father's love, only his own perceived freedom. It was only when he "came to himself" in the pigsty, recognizing his true lostness and admitting his sin, that he began the journey back, a journey towards regaining sight of his father's outstretched arms and loving heart. Our own journeys away from God often mirror this, blurring our vision of His goodness until repentance clears the way.

Practical Application

- 1. Conduct a "Spiritual Inventory":** This week, set aside dedicated time for quiet reflection and prayer. Honestly examine your life for any unconfessed sins, resentments, or compromises that might be creating a separation between you and God. Confess them specifically to Him and seek His forgiveness.
- 2. Re-Orient Your Gaze:** Intentionally re-focus your attention on God's character. Spend time reading scriptures that highlight His attributes—His holiness, love, justice, power, and mercy. Choose one attribute each day and meditate on what it means for your life.
- 3. Prioritize Consistent Spiritual Disciplines:** Re-establish or strengthen your habits of daily Bible reading, prayer, and worship. These are the primary means God uses to reveal Himself to us and to keep our fellowship vibrant and clear.

4. Engage in Godly Community: Actively participate in your church and connect with fellow believers. Accountability, encouragement, and shared worship within a faith community can help sharpen your spiritual vision and remind you of God's presence, especially when your own focus waivers.

Discussion Questions

1. In what specific ways have you personally experienced or observed the "hiding" of God's face due to sin in your own life or in the lives of others?
2. How does understanding God's unchanging character (His power and attentiveness) motivate you to confess sin rather than hide from it?
3. What are some practical "veils" or distractions in modern life that can cause us to inadvertently lose sight of God, even without overt sin?
4. Beyond simply stopping sinful actions, what does it mean to truly "turn" back to God with repentance, and how does that restore spiritual sight?

Closing Prayer

Lord God, we confess that our spiritual vision often falters, clouded by the dust of our own making. Forgive us for the sins that erect barriers between us and Your holy presence. Reawaken our hearts to Your unchanging power and attentive ear, and grant us the grace to walk in repentance that we might ever behold Your glorious face. May Your Holy Spirit illuminate Your truth, drawing us ever closer into fellowship with You. Amen.

Benediction

Now, may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.