

Is. 58:1 Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

The LORD is instructing the prophet Isaiah to boldly and loudly declare the sins of the people.

I think there are many pastors today who must ignore the teachings of the prophets and verses like these. The most popular preachers today are those that focus on God's love and blessings without reference to sin. They want you to "name and claim it" without any recognition of obedience to His commands. They want to focus on doing good things for others and neglect sharing the gospel or teaching the importance of worship and fellowship with the LORD. They don't want to speak out against sin and its consequences. They don't connect a right relationship to God to submission and denying self and obedience. More and more are even denying the scripture as an accurate expression of God's truth.

Is. 58:2 Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

Taken in context with verse one, this seems to be describing a people that have the outward signs of worship, but there is no heart or real commitment behind the actions. It's like people who go to church regularly, but there is nothing in their life that reflects a true relationship with the LORD. They are going through the motions, the ritual—doing what is socially expected.

It's interesting that note is made that the people are making a daily effort to maintain their image. It's amazing to what effort people will go to maintain an image rather than just submitting to the LORD with their heart. They don't realize that to submit to Him and let Him work through you is so much more rewarding.

Is. 58:3 Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

Is. 58:4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

It seems that the people are responding to Isaiah's declaration. They have so deceived themselves that they feel that God has ignored their expression of repentance and humility through fasting. The LORD recognizes their actions for what they truly are—an attempt to bribe Him through pretended devotion and obedience. Why are they fasting? To accomplish their own selfish purposes. They want God to side with them:

- In their strife - fights with one another (the Hebrew indicates personal disputes as well as legal battles).

- In their debates - quarreling with the intent to ruin one another.
- To “smite with the fist of wickedness” – this seems to be a call for God’s physical judgment for perceived injustice.

In other words, their showy acts of obedience are not producing a change in their lives; they are acting with selfish intent. Obedience to the LORD and true service to Him always produce change for the good in one’s life. The LORD makes it clear in the last part of verse 8 that theirs is not the kind of fasting that establishes fellowship and communion with Him.

Is. 58:5 *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?*

I think the LORD is basically saying—Do you think these showy acts of hypocrisy are acceptable to Me?

Is. 58:6 *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?*

Is. 58:7 *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

Now the LORD, through the prophet Isaiah, proceeds to describe the acceptable purposes for a fast and how a true heart attitude before Him would be reflected in your life.

- To loose or set people free from the pain caused by wickedness
- To undo or loose people from heavy burdens
- To free people from oppression/ discouragement
- To free people from bondage
- To share food with those who are hungry
- To share your home with the homeless
- To give clothes to those who need them
- To take care of your relatives who need help.

I liked the way that David Guzik put it:

First, they had to *stop* acting wickedly towards others (**loose the bonds of wickedness . . . undo the heavy burdens . . . let the oppressed go free . . . break every yoke**). Getting right with God *begins* by stopping the evil we do towards others.

Then, they had to *start* acting lovingly towards others (**share your bread with the hungry . . . cover those without clothing, and to not hide yourself from your own flesh**). Getting right with God *continues* by *doing* loving things for other people.

Is. 58:8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

The Hebrew for *light* states “luminous” or brilliant light and the idea of happiness. The Hebrew for *health* references “being restored to soundness, wholeness.” *Righteousness* references moral cleanliness.

The LORD is saying that when you repent and turn to Him with all your heart, which will be reflected in how you live according to His word, you will experience the greatest happiness and immediate spiritual healing and cleansing. Your relationship with Him will be restored, and He will be to you like the rear guard of an army for your protection as you move forward in obedience to Him.

Is. 58:9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

Is. 58:10 And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday:

Reminder—Isaiah writes poetically, which means that he uses a lot of repetition. Verses 9-10 are emphasizing the truth of verses 6-8. He is saying that true repentance and obedience will make the LORD attuned to your cry and ready to answer those prayers. Isaiah is addressing the nation as a whole, but the truth is applicable to the individual.

Again, I like the statements made by David Guzik regarding verses 9-10.

Re verse 9 – “These are sins of *commission*. They are sins that we go out and *do* against the LORD and against others. If we will walk right with God, we must stop and guard against *sins of commission*.”

Re verse 10 – “Failing to do these are sins of *omission*. They are things that we should have done, yet we have not. If we will walk right with God, we must open our eyes and do what is our loving duty before Him.”

Is. 58:11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

“the LORD shall guide thee continually” – This seems to refer back to the “glory of the LORD...” (verse 8) as exemplified by the cloud that led the Israel through the wilderness.

Exodus 13:21-22 And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

“satisfy thy soul in drought” – The Hebrew for the word *satisfy* states “have enough, have plenty of.” The word *soul* is a reference to the whole person, mental and physical. *Drought* is a reference to dry places, desert, scarcity or lack. Again, this should draw the minds of the Jewish people back to the Exodus when God supplied miraculously for them with manna, with meat (Exodus 16), and with water from a rock (Exodus 17 and Numbers 20) when needed.

I think proper application can also be made to the spiritual needs of man. In fact, I think God is more concerned with our spiritual sustenance than with our physical sustenance. It is spiritual health that leads to life everlasting.

“make fat thy bones” – The Hebrew for the word *make fat* means “to equip, strengthen.” This seems to have direct reference to physical strength.

As I read the last half of verse 11, I can’t help but think of Psalm 1. A man who is walking in obedience and willing to follow where God leads, will have a life that is abundant and full of blessing. Not only that, he will be able and willing to give refreshment and encouragement to others. It also reminds me of the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman.

John 7:38-39 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Is. 58:12 And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

This statement from the LORD seems to be in the form of a promise; there is coming a time of restored fellowship between Him and the nation of Israel. I don’t think we can say that this has been fulfilled in the past since the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah. This seems to be speaking of a restoration that will extend to “many generations.” I believe that this is speaking of the millennial kingdom when Christ comes to establish His earthly kingdom in response to the cry of His repentant people.

Matthew 23:39 For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Is. 58:13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words:

Is. 58:14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Verse 13 is a statement of actions proving your faith. When you can **deny yourself** on the Sabbath according to God's command and call it a delight with true deference to YHWH, it is a reflection of obedience from a pure heart in right relationship to the Lord. That type of obedience will result in experiencing the abundant life, and in Israel's case, full possession of the covenant promises made to Jacob—including the land.

I liked this statement from the NIV Commentary: "If fasting is to be an opportunity to show love to our neighbour, the sabbath should express first of all our love of God. . . . It will mean self-forgetfulness and the self-discipline of rising above the trivial. But to people of this spirit God can safely give great things."