

IS THIS NOT THE FAST THAT I HAVE CHOSEN ISAIAH 58

Text: Isaiah 58:6

Isaiah 58:6

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?*

Introduction:

For the majority of believers, the biblical principle of fasting is an overlooked element in regards to their practice of prayer.

However as we have seen the connection of faith and prayer, as well as prayer and the word of God, prayer and fasting are connected as well.

The role that fasting plays in the discipline of prayer is significant.

The Lord launched His open ministry after 40 hidden days and nights of prayer and fasting.

Matthew 4:1-11

¹ Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. ² And when he had fasted forty days and

forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. ³ And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. ⁴ But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. ⁵ Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. ⁷ Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. ⁸ Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; ⁹ And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. ¹⁰ Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. ¹¹ Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

What happens when we fast? In Isaiah 58 God associates at least 12 great promises with the practice of fasting.

1. THE PROBLEM OF FASTING

Occasionally a speaker or author will suggest that fasting obligates God to make a specific response.

Israel practiced fasting but often for the wrong reasons. In Isaiah 58 God list at least 4 improper reasons for fasting:

A. Fasting to Get God's Attention (58:3)

Isaiah 58:3

³Wherefore 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.

Israel was frustrated because God's favor and attention had not been aroused by their religious exercise.

B. Fasting Without Focusing on the Lord (58:3)

Isaiah 58:3

³Wherefore 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.

Fasting had become merely a physical exercise, with no affliction of soul or seeking after God.

C. Fasting Without Accompanying Humility of Heart (58:4)

Isaiah 58:4

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.

Fasting is not a way to impress God with who you are. It enables you to see His greatness and power more clearly as you humble yourself before Him.

D. Fast to Show External Piety (58:5)

Isaiah 58:5

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?

God saw that Israel had scheduled a fast for a great outward appearance. This was nothing but a spiritual show.

2. THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

In Isaiah 58:6-7 God reveals the appropriate motivations for fasting:

Isaiah 58:6-7

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? 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?*

A. To Loose the Bands of Wickedness (vs. 6)

All of us have certain wicked priorities and practices from which we need to be set free from.

Fasting prepares our hearts to hear what God has to say on the issues of life so we can take appropriate action and receive the spiritual victory on He can give.

B. To Undo the Heavy Burdens (vs. 6)

We all carry burdens just from everyday stresses and strains of life.

The Lord said:

Matthew 11:28

²⁸ *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

C. To Increase Our Sensitivity Toward the Needs of Others so that We Can Minister to Them (vs. 7)

Fasting makes it possible for us to give resources we would otherwise keep for ourselves.

When we are not busy feeding our own faces we can feed others.

D. To Invest in Our Families (vs. 7)

Though the practice of fasting is not for show, it is often good to let your family know of our intent. Fasting gives more opportunity to focus more time to see the needs and heart of your family members.

3. THE PROMISES OF FASTING

Fasting in harmony with the purposes of God is sure to bring blessing.

Notice the benefits for those who enter the practice of fasting with a serious heart and focusing on God:

A. Insight and Understanding (vs. 8)

Isaiah 58:8

⁸Then 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 reward.

The word light here means understanding. As we engage in prayer with fasting God will give us insight and discretion.

Jeremiah 33:3

³ Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

B. Physical Well-being (vs. 8)

Isaiah 58:8

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 reward.

Fasting for physical purposes can have an unusual positive effect on one's health.

C. A Deep Sense of what is Right (vs. 8)

Isaiah 58:8

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 reward.

The practice of fasting will give us a sense of righteousness that exceeds conscious reasoning.

D. Others Will Be Aware that You Have Been With God

Isaiah 58:8

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 reward.

God's presence will follow after us to protect and provide.

E. A Sense of Immediate Access to God (vs. 9)

Isaiah 58:9

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;

Prayer is not meant to pull on the heart-strings of an indifferent God. We do not pray to get His attention; we pray because we have His attention.

F. Protection from Spiritual Oppression (vs. 10)

Isaiah 58:10

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:

G. Moment by Moment Guidance from the Lord (vs. 11)

Isaiah 58:11

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.

H. Satisfaction (vs. 11)

Isaiah 58:11

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.

I. Strength and Stability

Isaiah 58:11

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.

J. Fruitfulness (vs. 11)

Isaiah 58:11

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.

K. Refreshed and a Refresher (vs. 11)

Isaiah 58:11

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.

L. Builder Rebuilder and Restorer

Isaiah 58:12

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.

Some churches, though they may never be known as the fastest growing or most dynamic have become havens for people whose destroyed lives have been restored by the power of God.

Close:

Is prayer with fasting a part of your life?

Which of the benefits God promises that accompany fasting the right way means the most to you?

What do you believe God could accomplish in your life through prayer with fasting?