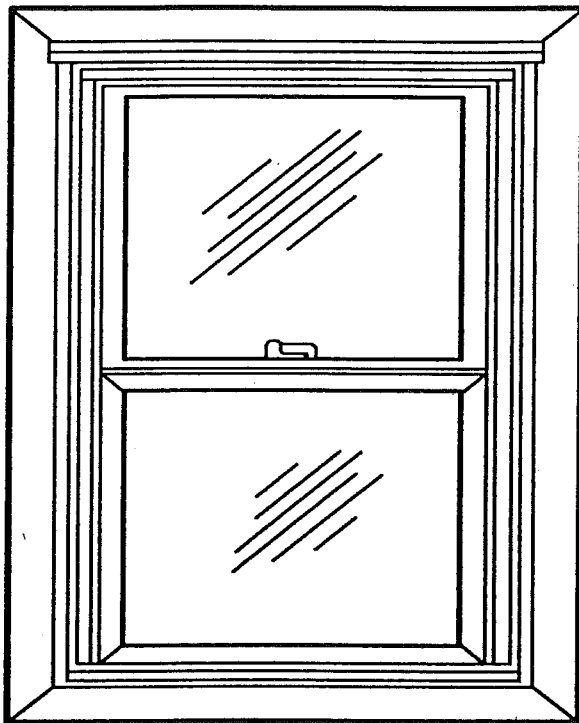


POWER IN TRANSPARENCY

(The Only Kind Of Devotion That God Responds To)
Isaiah 58:1-12



LET'S BE REAL

- ◆ The Deception In Fasting
- ◆ The Design In Fasting
- ◆ The Deliverance In Fasting

"Is this such a fast that I have chosen?" (Isaiah 58:5)

Bill Kirk

“POWER IN TRANSPARENCY”

Text: Isaiah 58:1-12
Subject: The Great Reward Of A Transparent Heart!

Introduction

Question: Why is Isaiah 58 in your Bible?

Answer: To get to the deep root system in each one of us?

Question: Is it that important to God that your heart be aligned with His heart?

Question: Is it that urgent that we address whatever could hinder His blessing?

Question: Is it that necessary to cooperate with God so that we can be healthy and bear much fruit?

(The Answer Is Found In Verse 1)

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins”.

(Remember Now)

- ◆ That God had appointed the prophet Isaiah to comfort His people on one hand. (Chapter 40:1)
- ◆ But here in chapter 58, God appoints Isaiah to convince us (or show us specific sins).

Question: Why does the Lord want to convince us (or convict us) of needed change?

Answer: Because God has your well being in mind: **(Because:)**

- #1. Conviction always prepares us for comfort.
- #2. Reproof always prepares us for renewal.
- #3. Transparency always prepares us for transformation.
- #4. Exposure always prepares us for excellency.

Question: Is it that important that we hear from God?

Answer: (V. 1), “Cry aloud, spare not, and lift up thy voice Isaiah”.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ “Cry aloud” (means) that the loudness of the call suggests the importance of the subject.
- ◆ “Spare not” (means) don’t hold back what God wants us to hear and understand.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ “Search the wounds deeply to bring healing”.
- ◆ “Lay it bare to the bone like an operation”.
- ◆ “Don’t skirt over what God wants to address”.
- ◆ “Let the Lord bring change where change is needed”.

Question: Why is the Lord so concerned, when in (v. 2), after all...

- ◆ ...People are seeking the Lord,
- ◆ ...People are delighted to know His ways,
- ◆ ...People kept the ceremonies and rituals,
- ◆ ...People took pleasure in the religious services,
- ◆ ...People attend church, sing songs, pay tithes and are active?

Question: Why is the Lord so concerned?

Question: Why is the Lord so emphatic to us?

Answer: Because the Lord saw that the outward service didn’t coincide with the inward heart.

(So God Gives Us A Conviction And Healing Word)

- ◆ Reasons why God wasn’t honoring the fast!
- ◆ Reasons why God will change us this morning by His Spirit!

Question: Pastor, how can someone be religious, sing, pray, give and yet not be honored by God?

I. The “Deception” Of Fasting (Verses 3-5)

(In Verse 3, how could Israel say, “We’ve been fasting but God isn’t hearing us”?)

#1. There was a “carnal” spirit:

(v. 3B) “...behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure”.

Question: What does it mean to “fast, and find pleasure”? (It means:)

#1. That Israel (while fasting) was indulging in the lusts and appetites of the flesh.

#2. Israel was drawing near to God on one hand, but on the other hand still entertaining certain idols.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ A carnal spirit prevailed (which said) “I can fast and pray to God with results; even while I harbor unconfessed sin”.

Application

Question: Is there any little fox that is spoiling the vine?

Question: Are there any inconsistencies that are weakening my testimony?

Question: Am I “up to date” in praying, meditating in the word, tithes, offerings and my thought life?

So #1, Israel was fasting outwardly, but inwardly ignoring things that God wanted to address!

#2. There was an “unforgiving” spirit:

Question: How do we know there was unforgiveness?

Answer: (V. 3B) “...and exact all your labors” (which means:)

- ◆ All things that are due you, you are demanding and requiring.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ On one hand – you are expecting God to be gracious and forgiving towards you...
- ◆ ...but on the other hand – you are unwilling to forgive those who need your mercy.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ “I’m not hearing your prayers or honoring your fast because you oppress me – by not being willing to relinquish your debtors.

Application

Question: Has anyone hurt you, offended you, betrayed you – that you are keeping score of?

Question: Do you harbor any ill-will towards anyone (revealed by slander towards them)?

Question: Is there anyone this very moment, that you need to release to God for judgment so that you can be heard in prayer? (Remember:)

- ◆ Unforgiveness is the poison we drink while we wait for the other person to die.
- ◆ Resentment is allowing someone you despise to live rent free in the house of your mind.
- ◆ A healthy Christian is one who can build with the bricks that others have thrown at them.

#3. There was a “competitive” spirit:

Question: How do we know that egos were in the way?

Answer: (V. 4) “Behold, ye fast for strife and debate”. (which means:)

- ◆ The Jews were divided into parties and factions.
- ◆ The sides were drawn and each side was striving to compete and get their way.
- ◆ People were disgracing God’s Name by putting their personal agenda (ahead of God’s agenda).

- ◆ The symptoms were strife and contention, but the root cause was pride and strong wills.

Question: Pastor, what's the root cause of a competitive, contentious spirit? (All read James 3:14 – 4:3)

(James teaches us the root causes (or motivation behind strife is:))

1. **Bitterness**, (which grows because of personal hurts).
2. **Envy**, (which is the desire for what someone else has).
3. **Guilt**, (which wants to justify wrong attitudes and actions).
4. **Rebellion**, (which attempts to justify an independent spirit).
5. **Pride**, (which desires to exalt itself).

Application

Question: Is there any root of pride, that is feeding the cancer of strife and competition in you?

Question: Are you at strife with someone you work with, live with, go to school with, or can't stand to be around?

#4. There was an "angry" spirit:

(V. 4) "You fast for strife and debate (now notice) and to smite with the fist of wickedness".

(“To smite with the fist of wickedness” means:)

- ◆ Even while fasting unto the Lord, some were involved in personal combats.
- ◆ There were those worshipping with unsubdued passions and unresolved anger.
- ◆ Personal combat and fist fights between people trying to have God's attention.

Question: And what does God say to a worshipper who fasts with unresolved anger inside?

Answer: (V. 4), "You shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice heard on high".

(Why Take A Time Out From Worship?)

- #1. Because we can't expect for God to hear us when unresolved stuff is in the heart. (and)
- #2. Because God wants to heal us on the inside, more than hear us on the outside.
- #3. Because God is out for your wholeness, health and well-being.

Application

Question: Is there anyone you are angry with today? (Anyone at all?)

#5. There was a "legalistic" spirit:

(V. 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?"

(In Other Words)

- ◆ People were thinking that their fasting was meritorious in nature.
- ◆ They believed that their hunger pains and self-denial gained them favor with God.
- ◆ Some were holding their head over, some were spreading sackcloth and ashes to appear spiritual.

(And God Said "Wait A Minute")

- ◆ "I'm not accepting any of this fasting and prayer" (Why not?)

- #1. Because God isn't impressed with me looking spiritual.
- #2. God is interested in my heart being changed.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Outward deeds of worship are only acceptable to the degree that my heart is right with God.

Application

Question: Am I honest and transparent, walking in the fear of the Lord?

II. The "Design" Of Fasting (Vs. 6 & 7)

Question: What kind of fasting will God honor?

Question: What is it that arrests God's attention?

(V. 6) "Is not this the fast that I have chosen"?

Question: What kind of inward heart finds answers to prayer (while fasting?)

(In Verses 6 & 7, One That Will...)

#1...loose the bands of wickedness,

#2...undo the heavy burdens,

#3...let the oppressed go free,

#4...break every yoke,

#5...deal bread to the hungry,

#6...take care of the poor,

#7...be sure to provide for your own family who is dependent upon you.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ The only kind of worship and devotion that God accepts, is that which flows from a heart full of love, unselfishness and transparency.

(In Other Words)

#1. Prayer that reaches heaven, is totally honest before God.

#2. Fasting that brings results, must come from a heart that is void of all pretending.

#3. Worship that benefits the worshipper, comes from the heart that is soft, pliable, convictable, repentive, transparent and willing for God to change it!!!

III. The "Deliverance" Of Fasting (Vs. 8-14)

Question: Pastor, what should I expect if I pray and fast the proper way, (with my heart pure before God)?

Question: What should I plan for?

#1. In v. 8, Plan to be Healed and Restored:

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily".

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Israel can expect to be healed and restored from the calamities that were inflicted upon them.
- ◆ So you can expect God's light to push out any darkness, and be recovered and healed yourself.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Plan for God to deliver you from every sin and plan for God to heal your broken heart.

#2. In v. 9, Plan to Have Answers to Your Prayers:

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer"

(In Other Words)

- ◆ If we renounce our sins and live transparent before God, we should expect that God will hear and answer our prayers.

- ◆ If we cover up (forget it) but if we clean up, (then believe the Lord to answer prayer).
- ◆ Beloved, a pure heart allows God to answer prayer, He's wanting to answer for you.

#3. In v. 10, Plan to be Joyful Instead of Depressed and Discouraged:

"...then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon – day".

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Calamities and trials that represent "dark days" (will be followed by a bright and cheerful light from God).

(In Other Words)

"Weeping may endure for a season, but joy will come in the morning".

(In Other Words)

- ◆ Where you're at – is not where you're staying!!! (Your trial is going to be followed by "Noon Day Light" or Joyfulness and Gladness")

#4. In v. 11, Plan to Be Led and Totally Content:

"And the Lord shall guide thee continually and satisfy thy soul in drought...and you'll be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not".

(In Other Words)

- ◆ We have droughts and deserts – yes!
- ◆ But God renews those spiritually dry with fresh water from above.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ The streams of God are always flowing.
- ◆ The weary pilgrim can be renewed and refreshed (and live content).
- ◆ The grace of God is not exhausted, but full and free for the thirsty!!!
- ◆ And God leads you and provides for you every step of the journey!!!

Fact: Water here is God promising relief in the weariness seasons of life.

Conclusion

- ◆ If we are willing to do our part, and deal with any carnality, unforgiveness, competition, anger and legalism,
- ◆ Then God will see to it that we are: Restored and healed, heard in prayer, joyful instead of depressed, guided and contented.

(In Other Words)

- ◆ A transparent heart will be delivered from besetting sins,
- ◆ and, heard in the place of prayer,
- ◆ and, joyful instead of downcast,
- ◆ and, healthy instead of weakened!

Altar Call

AMEN!
Bill Kirk, Pastor