

Isaiah 58 (ESV) True and False Fasting

<sup>1</sup> “Cry aloud; do not hold back;  
lift up your voice like a trumpet;  
**declare to my people their transgression,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.**

<sup>2</sup> Yet they seek me daily  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that did righteousness  
and did not forsake the judgment of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments;  
they delight to draw near to God.

<sup>3</sup> “Why have we **fasted**, and you see it not?  
Why have we **humbled ourselves**, and you take  
no knowledge of it?”  
Behold, in the day of your fast you **seek your own  
pleasure,**  
and **oppress all your workers.**

<sup>4</sup> Behold, you fast only to **quarrel and to fight**  
and to **hit with a wicked fist.**

Fasting like yours this day  
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

<sup>5</sup> Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day for a person to humble himself?  
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,  
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?  
Will you call this a fast,  
and a day **acceptable to the LORD?**

*Notice, a fast  
must be  
acceptable to  
the LORD.*

<sup>6</sup> **“Is not this the fast that I choose:**  
to loose the bonds of wickedness,  
to undo the straps of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?”

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover him,  
**and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?**

<sup>8</sup> **Then** shall **your light** break forth like the dawn,  
and **your healing** shall spring up speedily;  
**your righteousness** shall go before you;  
the **glory** of the LORD shall be your rear guard.  
<sup>9</sup> **Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;  
you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’**  
If you take away the yoke from your midst,  
the pointing of the finger, and speaking  
wickedness,  
<sup>10</sup> if you pour yourself out for the hungry  
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,

**then** shall your light rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be as the noonday.  
<sup>11</sup> And the LORD will guide you continually  
and satisfy your desire in scorched places  
and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters do not fail.  
<sup>12</sup> **And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;**  
you shall raise up the foundations of many  
generations;  
**you shall be called the repairer of the breach,**  
the restorer of streets to dwell in.

<sup>13</sup> “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,  
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,  
and call the Sabbath a delight  
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;  
if you honor it, not going your own ways,  
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly,  
<sup>14</sup> then you shall take delight in the LORD,  
and I will make you ride on the heights of the  
earth.

I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your

*This whole part of the passage  
seems to be referring to how you  
treat others.*

father,

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

**Please answer the following study questions after a careful examination the text of Isaiah 58:**

1. The prophet was told to declare to God’s people their \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Imagine how God’s people sought the LORD daily for several things:

- a. To know His ways (direction for their lives)
- b. To experience righteous judgements (justice and fairness in society)
- c. To draw near to Him (be in God’s constant presence – His power/protection).

They asked for these things as if they were a nation that did \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Look at some detail concerning fasting in the passage. Isaiah asks in verse 3, “why have we fasted and don’t see that our unrighteousness keeps us from the things we need from / desire from God? There is a parallel statement in verse 3 (remember: Hebrew poetry). Parallelism says the same thing 2 different ways.

Why have we fasted, and you see it not?

Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?’

When you compare the statements above, we see that another way of describing “fasting” is to

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. List the 4 things that God’s people were doing while they were fasting in verse 4:

- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. \_\_\_\_\_

5. According to the second part of verse 4, we can see a principle purpose of fasting is to:

\_\_\_\_\_.

6. God asks a question in verse 5: “Is such the fast that I choose?”

- a. A day for a person to humble himself
- b. A day for a person to bow down his head like a reed
- c. A day to \_\_\_\_\_.

7. What do you think it means to “humble himself” in verse 5?

\_\_\_\_\_.

8. Notice in verse 6 God says(rhetorically): “**Is not this the fast that I choose**” (IOW: Isn’t this the kind of fast that I choose?):

- a. To \_\_\_\_\_ the bonds of wickedness;
- b. To \_\_\_\_\_ the straps of the yoke;
- c. To let the \_\_\_\_\_ go free;
- d. To break every \_\_\_\_\_?
- e. To share your bread with the \_\_\_\_\_;
- f. To bring the \_\_\_\_\_ poor into your house;
- g. To \_\_\_\_\_ the naked (paraphrase);
- h. Not to hide yourself from your own \_\_\_\_\_?

9. Two questions:

- i. What are straps of a yoke?

\_\_\_\_\_.

- ii. What is “own flesh” referring to in verse 7(b)?

\_\_\_\_\_.

10. Verses 8-12 imply that the help God’s people expected from the LORD may have been hindered in some way because of their \_\_\_\_\_.

11. Examine verse 11. Does it seem that God is in any way saying to the Israelites that they will never have adversity and challenges if they do what He requires of them? What in verse 11 helps you answer this question: \_\_\_\_\_.

12. **Thought Question:** We may ask, “what does this passage have to do with fasting?” Look at verse 6 again. Fasting is much more than giving up foods and favored things for a period of time. Fasting involves...

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.