

Magnolia Missionary Baptist of Beaumont
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Lesson 8 for Tuesday, January 17, 2023, and Sunday, January 22, 2023

Unit II: God's Promises

Topic: Living Right over Empty Rituals

Text: Isaiah 58: 6-10

Key Term:

Fasted- abstained from (did not consume) food or drink. **Fasting** is a spiritual discipline. **Fasting** along with prayer, Jesus said, releases God's power (Mark 9:29). **Fasting** and prayer can restore or strengthen your intimacy with God and demonstrating utter dependence on God.

Introduction:

In the book of Isaiah, God is speaking through the Prophet Isaiah. This book contains prophecies attributed to the prophet Isaiah. Chapter 56-66 are often referred to Trito-Isaiah or Third Isaiah. Chapter 58 contains a proclamation regarding fasting that pleases God. This Chapter emphasizes God displeasure in empty religious rituals that do not proceed from a sincere obedience heart. God refocused Israel toward the fundamentals of true worship, and outlined the purpose and outcomes of an acceptable fast. An explanation of background scriptures, Isaiah 58: 1- 5 is needed before discussing the lesson text Isaiah 58: 6- 10.

Isaiah 58: 1- 2 explains that the Lord directed Isaiah to boldly declare to the house of Jacob (Israel) their sins. These sins included outwardly performing religious practices without sincere intent and thus acting as if they were a righteous nation that had not forsaken the Lord. One law these Israelites outwardly practiced was fasting.

Isaiah 58:3 tells what the people asked the Lord about fasting. They wondered why He did not acknowledge their fasting, The Lord response to the people was that rather than seeking to be repentant and draw closer to God while they fasted. They sought worldly pleasures and engaged in worldly activities, instead of showing compassionate to others.

Isaiah 58: 5 The Lord questioned about people fasting. God questioned whether the outward appearances of fasting reflected the proper spirit of the fast that He intended.

Topic 1:

- **Sow as Stated (Isaiah 58: 6-7)**

God clarified the fasting/worshipping that He demanded.

These verses are words from God to His people when they were going through all kinds of religious routine. Fasting participating in religious rituals but they were ignoring the poor around them, They were oppressing people around them or ignoring the oppressed around

them. And God says to them, that's not what devotion to me looks like. It is like empty religious ritual disconnected from care for the poor and the oppressed in the world. Isaiah calls the people to be merciful and just. Godly, faithful fasting that pleases God requires us to serve others and not harbor wickedness in our hearts. Matthew 25: 35-36, Jesus words were, **“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”** If we fast as the Lord intends, then we can help relieve others burdens and receive relief from our burdens.

Topic 2:

- Reap the Rewards (Isaiah 58: 8-10)

Isaiah 58:8, we are called to love and care for those in need in the world. That's when your light breaks forth like the dawn, as morning. To appreciate light, one must have stumbled through darkness. Second, they could expect physical healing. Third, the people can could expect that their righteousness shall go before them, and the glory of the Lord will be their rear guard. It is a promise of protection, front and rear. Finally, and most importantly, if the people established justice, set the oppressed free, and feed the hungry, then God will answer their prayers for help. If they helped others, then God would help them.

In Isaiah 58: 9-10, God called the people to three remedies of unjust or oppressive behavior. The first remedy was to remove the yoke of bondage from those who are not free. The second was to stop finger pointing, which could be a way of causing blame. The third was to stop speaking evil of others. These verses show that God wants the outward expression of our faith to reflect a sincere heart full of compassion and God's love. To live a life that honors God, we must do more than go through the motions. We must live our lives to show our love for God and His people. When God's people show love for the oppressed, those who are in need or mistreated by others, God will shine His light on His people so even their darkness will be taken away.

Fasting allows God to fill up our empty spiritual vessels. Life is so busy. It is busy for the adults with their daily duties/ tasks of working; laundering; cooking; eating; shopping, sleeping, and more. For the youth, their days are filled with friends, sports, school, homework, chores and more. All of these things can easily distract us from connecting with God. We are encouraged to set aside time to fast and focus on God. If we make room for God in our lives through fasting coupled with prayer, and our relationship with God will grow. He can bless us with light, health, righteousness, protection, guidance, and the will to care for the poor and needed. No matter a person's age, God wants us to show compassion and kindness toward others.