

God cares for the Righteous
Warning to Ungodly

Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD,
"and I will heal him.

20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea;
for it cannot be quiet,
and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

21 There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

True and False Fasting

58 "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.

2 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.

3 '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.

4 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.

5 Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?

Fasting

19 God declares the offer is available to everyone no matter where they are (far or near). His healing is both spiritual and physical. Here is a promise to those who respond to his leading.

20-21 Here the section is concluded w/a warning. The promises of God are not intended for the wicked. They will live lives of turmoil, tossed about w/out a foundation. Even as the righteous are blessed w/God's peace the wicked live in fear always under attack.

1 God tells Isaiah to declare in a loud voice their sins and transgressions. Here He calls them Jacob the deceiver. The prophet is not to hold back as he preached the message he has received from God.

2 Here we see why God is so upset w/them. They want the benefits of knowing God but do not live as the people of God. Here their worship is for selfish reasons. They are acting, believing God does not see anything beyond what they want Him to see. There empty worship is offered hoping to gain insight & favor w/out service or righteousness.

3 The people want to know why they fast if God will not answer them. God responds that their fasting is mixed w/their seeking pleasure. The people think their acts and actions are enough to please God. God responds that He sees everything they do, not just the fasting that they hope impresses God.

4 They are merely doing a religious exercise to somehow earn God's favor, but their lives are unchanged. Their evil lifestyle is in no way changed by their "self-righteous" worship. God is clear that such a lifestyle stops God from even hearing them. Their hypocrisy stops God's mercy and grace from being given to them. God is not opposed to fasting. It is just theirs is not real fasting and will in no way impact God.

5a When God looks to earth the fast He expects is very different than what they are doing. Such a fast starts w/a humble and contrite heart. It is a time of submission and a return to worship to seek God's will. It is a time to seek God, not a time to demand or even expect anything beyond the Holy presence of God examining your life.

FASTING

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?

6 "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?

7 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?

8 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.

9 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,

10 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.

11 And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;

5b) Here God wants to be clear that fasting may seem to be the actions described here. These can be done by the righteous & the self-righteous alike. It has to be more than just bending low and putting on a good show. Mat. 6.16-18 Jesus says not to do this. Jesus says we are to hide the fast and share it only w/ God.

6) Here is the results of a true fast. The person fasting is changed to discover and do God's will. They are moved to help free others from bondage and deliver them from evil.

7) Here more positive actions are used to illustrate that a true fast is about serving God by helping others who are less fortunate. Jones p.148 points out that a fast can be from other things than food. A person may fast from "the lust for money," and instead help your "neighbor instead of robbing him." Clearly fasting is not to be seen as a religious ceremony but a call to righteousness and a deeper relationship w/ God.

8) When such fasting takes place God becomes evident in your life. Healing, righteousness and God's glory are all part of God interacting with the believer who is part of a righteous or holy fast.

9) When God refuses to hear the ungodly (vs. 4) he now will not only hear but He will answer. Yet conditions remain.

9b-10a) Here is two IF's that lead to God answering the prayer of the fasting person. Here fasting must be accompanied w/ a righteous person living holiness and demonstrating it to those that he comes in contact with.

10b) The word is completely different for the person serving God w/ righteous living. Light replaces darkness and sadness of the inner person is changed into a clarity that helps the person see life as filled w/ positives. Here we see that helping others is part of God's call on believers. Self-centered happiness is not how God wants people to live.

11) Here God's care and blessing for the righteous & those that live for Him is laid out. They will never be alone. This is a promise of God in the O.T. & N.T. 2nd He will take care of you under the worst circumstances. 3rd He will give you inner strength to withstand pressure & problems.

FASTING

and you shall be like a watered garden,
 like a spring of water,
 whose waters do not fail.
 12 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.

Promise to the Faithful

13 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;
 14 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
 father,
 for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Evil and Oppression

why prayers are not answered

59 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it
 cannot save,
 or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
 2 but your iniquities have made a separation,
 between you and your God,
 and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.

11b) the image of blessing where water is plentiful. In the region of the Middle east this is a dream of a perfect life where water never runs out. Here is a picture of a promise of abundant care and resources. Here the mercy and grace is provided w/out restraint for the believer.

12) THAT WHICH HAS BEEN DESTROYED BECAUSE OF SIN CAN BE REBUILT & RESTORED BY THE FASTING OF THE RIGHTEOUS. Here will be a new beginning that will last for generations. THE ACTIONS OF THOSE WHO TURN BACK TO GOD extend far beyond themselves. THEY are preparing the way for others to serve and worship GOD.

13-14) This chapter on fasting has been a warning against false worship and a promise to those who do so as true worshippers of GOD. THESE last two verses are a promise to those who RESTORE GOD in their hearts to HIS RIGHTEOUS PLACE. "YOUR PLEASURE" refers to seeking self-satisfaction w/out GOD. Those who seek GOD represented by the SABBATH OBSERVANCE DISCOVER TRUE "DELIGHT" THROUGH WORSHIP AND SERVICE TO GOD AND HIS STATED MISSION OF REDEMPTION AND SALVATION. THIS TURNING FROM SELF TOWARD GOD WILL bring the believer to new heights of living, worship, AND FELLOWSHIP. AS GOD has blessed in the Past (JACOB) He will (again) to those who discover the true fast, true worship, AND OBEDIENCE to A Relationship with GOD of Joy and honor (the SABBATH.) Here again is the conditional "IF"-THEW" phrase of action and reaction. In vss 9-12 it was about relationships with other men. Here vss 13-14 it is about the relationship with GOD. There is no relationship that is not touched by GOD for the believer.

1) Here Isaiah uses language he also used in Isa. 50:2. He is explaining why the people's prayers are not answered. It is not because GOD cannot reach them. He can certainly do that. It is also not because He cannot hear them.

2) but the reason nothing is happening and GOD is not helping them rest with the people's choices. THEIR iniquities (plural) are like a layer that stands between them and GOD. GOD cannot look on their sins. This figurative expression shows how much GOD hates sin. He has to turn away and in a form cover His ears because He must block it from His mind.

THE people have put up the barrier that separates them. Yet, it will be GOD who will reach out to them in His love.