

REPAIRERS OF THE BREACH

INTRODUCTION

The last time we were in Isaiah we finished up to chapter 47. I'm going to preach from chapter 58, but

Remember that Israel is in forced exile in Babylon over 700 miles away, which might as well be the other side of the planet at the time.

Isaiah has been delivering God's promise of deliverance over and over. His mission from God now is to comfort the people of God in their exile while continuing to urge them to rely on God and not themselves.

These themes essentially repeat over and over until chapter 58. I won't repeat them, but there are some beautifully written promises and encouragements there that you should read on your own.

Chapter 48 brings something new. Something more specific. God is going to call Cyrus the Great of Persia to conquer the Babylonians and Israel will be delivered in the process.

As historical fact, this does indeed happen.

This entire section, you might even say the entire book of Isaiah reaches its dramatic climax in chapter 52 where Jesus becomes most visible and present for us to see.

In order to really understand chapter 58, we need to get reacquainted with the context of the previous chapters. To do that, let's read some of chapter 52 and 53.

READ Isaiah 52:13-53:12

ISRAEL COMES HOME TO THE WRECKAGE

After so many years in exile, Jerusalem was in ruins. Not just from the invasion of Assyria and then Babylon, but from neglect and disuse.

Not only that, but Persia had taken over the land and though they were kind to Israel, Israel was no longer a free agent.

In addition, foreigners had moved into Jerusalem and now occupied homes and property that had been left vacant.

The long term cost of exile was great.

Even though they had been liberated and set free, there was an overwhelming amount of rebuilding to do. The life they had known before exile was going to be difficult to put back together.

This is where we find the people of God at the start of Isaiah 58.

IS GOD EVEN PAYING ATTENTION?

READ Isaiah 58:1-5

They call a fast to ask God to give them all that He has promised over the years in exile.

The Law of Moses only prescribed one fast per year in connection with the Day of Atonement. This was a “voluntary” fast that was above and beyond what they had to do.

You would think this would move God to bless them!

But it doesn't. In fact, it seems to only irritate Him. WHY?

Their fasting is only an external facade of piety and in the end is hollow and meaningless to God.

- They are self-centered
- They oppress their workers, treating them like slaves
- They argue and fight, apparently to the point of violence (introduce hunger and the heart gets exposed)
- Their fasting is formal and ritualized full of robotic bowing and sackcloth as if that was all God was interested in was hollow ritual and external show.

They come together and worship, fast, and pray. These are all the same things we do. But God rejects it all because does not reflect the true reality of what is in their hearts *expressed in how they live.*

THE KIND OF FASTING GOD DESIRES

READ Isaiah 58:6-7

VERSE 6

“LOOSE THE BONDS OF WICKEDNESS” - INJUSTICE

“Loose the chains of injustice”

Points to the need to work for the abolition of every way in which wrong social structures, or wrongdoers in society, destroy or diminish the due liberty in others.

“UNDO THE STRAPS OF THE YOKE” - INHUMANITY

A yoke was used to control animals.

This refers to the need to eliminate every way in which people are treated like animals, like less than human, and their human dignity is diminished.

“LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE” - INEQUALITY

The oppressed are simply those 'broken' by life. It is not enough to simply make things better. Where the broken are captive, they are to be given freedom. We are not to simply loosen the harness of the yoke to ease their pain. The yoke is to be destroyed altogether.

VERSE 7

This verse gets more specific to our immediate surroundings. Verse 6 was dealing with big, long term problems that require focus over the long term.

Verse 7 deals with the things that are close at hand.

“SHARE YOUR BREAD”

Suggests actually sharing your own food with the hungry. You are sharing out of your own abundance, with your own hands.

“BRING THE HOMELESS POOR INTO YOUR HOUSE”

Refers to the opening of the home – true hospitality – welcoming the stranger into your home and family

“WHEN YOU SEE THE NAKED, TO COVER HIM, AND NOT TO HIDE YOURSELF FROM YOUR OWN FLESH”

It's an oddly phrased verse. “hide yourself” means TO IGNORE. So, Isaiah is saying **“when you see the naked, cover him instead ignoring your fellow man.”**

*Not only are we to clothe those that have need, but there is an immediacy to the statement “when you see”. There is no delay. If there is no delay, the only way to cover him is to do it with your own cloak. **There is selflessness, urgency and generosity wrapped up in one statement.***

Referring to verse 7, Alec Motyer says, “...there is a whole field of care within the home and the family, for it is possible to be socially sensitive and at the same time domestically shortsighted.”

The epicenter of the mission of God's Church is not the building, it's your homes.

Will you give your home to God to let Him do with it whatever He wants, even if it means having strangers in it? Even if it means losing some of your leisure time and privacy?

RIGHT AWAY WE CAN SEE ISSUES IN OUR DAY THAT COME UNDER THESE CATEGORIES:

- Racism
- Immigration
- Child abuse
- Spousal abuse
- Abortion
- Elderly

- Poverty and homelessness
- Sex Trafficking
- On and on we could go

These are things that you and I MUST be concerned about and to the degree that we ignore them our worship, our prayer and our fasting is a hollow sound in heaven. A clanging cymbal, as I Corinthians 13 says.

HOW GOD REACTS TO THIS KIND OF FASTING

READ Isaiah 58:8-12

The blessing is total. It is all that Israel was fasting for, and more.

Verse 10 is surprisingly eloquent – some of the poetic nuance is lost in translation.

“If you grant your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the soul of the afflicted.”

This speaks of a deep sacrifice. It’s the giving up of the desires of our soul for comfort so that the afflicted may be comforted in their souls. It’s deep self sacrifice on a personal level, in order that another may be fulfilled just as deeply.

This isn’t the kind of charity that just throws money at a problem while maintaining a professional distance. This isn’t a drive by mercy project. This is real, personal, sacrificial investment in the plight of another in a way that costs more than money and time. It speaks of a willingness to be near the hungry and afflicted long enough to get attached.

CONCLUSION

We are called as a Body to be known as “repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to dwell in.”

We go the city walls and close the holes where the Enemy has broken in. We wander through the streets, restoring what has been broken and destroyed.

The ancient ruins speak of the tragedies of the past being renovated. Cyrus commissioned the temple in Jerusalem to be rebuilt.

If we want revival, this is where we start. Revival without this kind of “fasting” is a hollow husk of religion that will not satisfy heaven.

A STARTING POINT

I believe the starting point for us is opening up our homes. To live like we actually do understand that the epicenter of Christian life and mission is not the building, but it’s the home.

ALTAR CALL

Who will give their home to Jesus and His mission? Who will dedicate it to repairing the breach?