

Isa 58:1-12
God's Word on Fasting
May 1, 2022

The fast that does not please the Lord 58:1-5

1 "Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, And declare to My people their transgression And to the house of Jacob their sins. 2 "Yet they seek Me day by day and delight to know My ways, As a nation that has done righteousness And has not forsaken the ordinance of their God. They ask Me for just decisions, They delight in the nearness of God. 3 'Why have we fasted and You do not see? Why have we humbled ourselves and You do not notice?' Behold, on the day of your fast you find your desire, And drive hard all your workers. 4 "Behold, you fast for contention and strife and to strike with a wicked fist. You do not fast like you do today to make your voice heard on high. 5 "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it for bowing one's head like a reed And for spreading out sackcloth and ashes as a bed? Will you call this a fast, even an acceptable day to the LORD?

Religious fasting:

Lack of humbling yourself with no repentance (vs. 1-3).

Asceticism - sackcloth and ashes (v. 5).

Days of religious observance, even under the Law, were always intended to be days of kindly forbearance towards the poor, of the remission of burdens, or even of the actual giving of relief.

You find your own desire when you fast (v. 3).

You drive hard your workers, - Contention and strife - strike with a wicked fist (v.3).

The fast that pleases God 58:6-7; 9b-10a

6 "Is this not the fast which I choose, To loosen the bonds of wickedness, To undo the bands of the yoke, And to let the oppressed go free And break every yoke? 7 "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry And bring the homeless poor into the house; When you see the naked, to cover him; And not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

To meet the needs of the oppressed

("loosen the bonds", "undo the bands of the yoke," "break every yoke").

To meet the needs of those in poverty

("feed the hungry," "clothe the naked").

The fasting which is pleasant to Jehovah consists in releasing the oppressed, and in kindness to the helpless; not in abstinence from eating as such, but in sympathetic acts of that self-denying love, which gives up bread or any other possession for the sake of doing good to the needy. (from Keil & Delitzsch Commentary)

"not to hide yourself from your own flesh"

"not eating is a natural fast, but abstaining from sin is a spiritual fast."

9 "... If you remove the yoke from your midst, The pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 10 And if you give yourself to the hungry And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, ...

Fasting and following religious rituals will not manipulate God into showing favor. He is more concerned with the motivation of the heart than the outward act. Oppressing the poor and weak of society, and burdening them with slavery, is the opposite of what they should be doing. God's desire for social justice is a familiar theme in the prophets. (from Faithlife Study Bible)

Motivation: (Isaiah 58:3-8)

Fasting may be sincere and acceptable to God; or it can be insincere and unacceptable to God.

Acceptable

1. To loose the bonds of wickedness
2. To undo the bands of the yoke
3. To let the oppressed go free
4. To break every yoke
5. To give your bread to the hungry
6. To bring the homeless poor into the house
7. To cover the naked
8. To not hide yourself from your own flesh.

Unacceptable

1. To find your desire
2. To drive hard all your workers
3. To fast with contention
4. To fast with strife
5. To fight with the fist of wickedness

The rewards of fasting God's way 58:8-9a; 10b-12

8 "Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. 9 "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; You will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' ...

"Your light will break out" = you will have no more gloom.

"Your recovery will speedily spring forth" = healing.

"The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard" = protection

"you will call, and the LORD will answer" = your prayers will be answered.

10b Then your light will rise in darkness And your gloom will become like midday.¹¹ "And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. 12 "Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; You will raise up the age-old foundations; And you will be called the repairer of the breach, The restorer of the streets in which to dwell.

"the LORD will continually guide you"

Your thirst will be quenched and your bones strengthened.

Results of Fasting:

1. It can have a remarkable purging and revitalizing effect on the body.
2. When done with right motives, it can promote health.
3. The power of bad habits can be broken through prayer and fasting.
4. Fasting opens you more to the Holy Spirit, a deeper dimension of the anointing.
5. There will be of deepening of one's conscience of God.
6. If help brings a deeper reverence for God.
7. Fasting deepens humility (Ezr 8:21; 1Pt 5:6).
8. Fasting intensifies prayer concentration.
9. Fasting solidifies determination.
10. Fasting feeds your faith.
11. Fasting fires earnestness and zeal.
12. Fasting breaks the strongholds of the appetite.