

Heart Change, Life Change, World Change

Isaiah 58

Pastor Guy Gray

First Redeemed, Then Rebuked?

Isaiah 58 is tough going. Verse one is a trumpet blast declaration of the sin and rebellion of God's people. Here is what makes it even more intense: God rebukes the very people who have been redeemed from captivity and given a brand new life. This word is for the redeemed—the saved—the rescued. God has given them new life—new beginning. He has more in mind for them than they can imagine. Instead of moving forward into the new life God has given them, they are falling back into the sinful patterns of their old life. All the while they are going through the motions of worshiping and seeking God. But it isn't real—not at heart level. So God rebukes the redeemed. He cares too much to let this situation continue. He knows our hearts. He knows that while we can't fool him, we can easily fool ourselves. The rebuke of God is actually an activity of His gracious love. He has more for us. He demands more from us. He redeemed us for a purpose—a life changing, world changing purpose. Isaiah 58 is God's loving rebuke to get us back on track and keep us there.

False Fast – True Fast

Fasting is the primary theme in Isaiah 58. This is perfect because fasting is all about getting serious with God. When we fast we intentionally deny ourselves and create physical hunger in our bodies. The hunger we feel physically is a way of reflecting on the spiritual hunger of our hearts. Fasting is a way of saying, to God and ourselves, that we are deeply serious about our longing for God—wanting to experience God and His work in our lives.

In Isaiah 58 God's people were fasting, but it was a false fast. They were going through the motions of spirituality, but it wasn't real. The key to understanding the false fast is in the middle of verse 3: "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please." This phrase appears again, twice, at the end of the chapter (verse 13). The Hebrew phrase means that the people were focused above all on the desires of their own hearts. This is the essence of false fasting! The false fast happens when we go through the motions of seeking God—but we are actually more concerned about getting what we want out of life than conforming to the will and purpose of God.

The true fast is totally different. *The true fast is about bringing your heart, desires and intentions into alignment with the heart, desires and intentions of God.* True fasting is about heart level transformation. During the true fast we ask the question...do I care about God's glory and God's kingdom purpose in this world more than I care about my own comfort, issues or circumstances?

To Set Free, to Share, to Clothe, to Feed

God cares for hurting people and He calls us to care for them too. Do you care for hurting people? This is one of the best ways to know whether your heart is coming into alignment with the heart of God. If your spiritual practices (prayer, worship, scripture reading & fellowship) are primarily focused on yourself—how you can be blessed by God (joy, direction, success, fulfillment), then there is a serious problem in your relationship with God. In Isaiah 58, God points out their lack of compassion for hurting people. This is the primary indication that their hearts are not being transformed, even though they are "redeemed" and involved in all kinds of spiritual activities. So God calls them (and us) to turn from self focus. It has to be more than just going through the motions—it must be from a genuine heart for God and love for people (see 1 Corinthians 13). This is radical—it requires inner transformation. This is what God seeks to do in our hearts through the work of His Spirit within us. Isaiah 58 is a powerful call to transformation in our lives, from the inside out. God won't settle for

less. God will actually rebuke the redeemed. All because He has something life changing and world changing He wants to do through our lives.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Am I open and listening for the conviction of God's Spirit in my heart? Would I love to hear God's word of rebuke for my life as much as His word of encouragement, knowing that this too is an expression of His love? Am I going through the motions of spiritual worship and seeking God, but failing to submit my own life agenda to the will of God? Do I want my heart, intentions and desires to come into full alignment with the heart, intentions and desires of God? Is my spirituality mostly self focused? Do I care about hurting people? Do I care about the mission of God? What about the glory of God? What is God saying to my heart right now? Should I skip a meal or two and take that time to focus on my relationship with God—praying to bring my heart into alignment with the heart of God?

Reflection for This Week

This week, read through Isaiah 58 each day and spend some time with Lord. Use the questions above to guide your time. Pray, journal and allow the Lord to work in your life.

RW Happenings

Saturday, August 23rd •

Who's Coming to BBQ 7-9pm

Today is your last opportunity to sign up for Who's Coming to BBQ! Just fill out the postcard from the lobby and drop it into a fishbowl! For more information contact Kent Nielsen @ 639.7897

Financial Peace University •

Sign-up Today!

Two classes will be offered starting in September...

Mondays starting September 15th & Thursdays starting September 18th • 6:30-8:30

This is a 13 week series that teaches biblical principles on how to handle finances. Childcare is available for Thursdays class only by registration (space is limited, so sign-up early) Contact Julie Messenger at 699-2226 or julie@riverwest.org

Saturday, August 23rd •

River Day @ the Hamilton's 2-9pm

Student Ministries has another great River Day planned for Jr. High & High School Students. Medical release form required - pick up a flyer in the lobby or contact Pastor Josh at 699.2226 or josh@riverwest.org

Sunday, September 7th •

Jr. High Youth Group 5:30-7pm

Returns to Sundays starting September 7th

Coming September 7th...

French Toast & Sausage Sunday
Community Group & Bible Study Sign-ups

FYI • • •

For more information on what's happening at River West Church, go to **www.riverwest.org** and click on the calendar link