

THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

THE WAY OF RESTORATION: ISAIAH 58



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Way of Restoration: Isaiah 58
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Introduction to *Isaiah 58*

Israel's problem was that they had allowed their love for God to grow cold. They continued going through the motions of religion, but there was no heart for God in their devotions. Meanwhile, the idols of their pagan neighbors were garnering the bulk of their attention.

God indicts them for their shallow religion. Using fasting and the Sabbath as types of their religious life, God exposes the emptiness and ugliness of their rebellion against Him. They will not know restoration until they face up to their spiritual emptiness and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord again.

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1 Empty Delight

Pray Psalm 77.13-15.

Your way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary;
Who *is* so great a God as *our* God?
You *are* the God who does wonders;
You have declared Your strength among the peoples.
You have with *Your* arm redeemed Your people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph.

Read Isaiah 58.1, 2.

Reflect.

1. To whom is God speaking in verse 1? In verse 2?
2. What is the problem God is beginning to point out here?

Meditate.

You might want to take a moment to review Isaiah 1.10-17, because in this part of our study of Isaiah is a commentary on the state of religion among the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

God instructs Isaiah to sound like the blast of a trumpet against the sins of His people (v. 1). As the minister of God's Word, Isaiah was duty-bound to point out the transgressions of the people. How could they repent of sins unless their sins were brought to their attention? And without repentance, how would they ever know the healing and peace of the Lord?

I imagine the people got a little tired of hearing Isaiah preach against their idolatry, their lack of love for their neighbors, and their covetousness, among their other transgressions. In chapter 58, he gets at the very root of their problem, the root God exposed in Isaiah 1.10-17: The people of Judah and Jerusalem were playing at religion, going through the motions of faith without any heart commitment or application to life. In this chapter, Isaiah will focus on two particular aspects of their religious life, to expose their shallowness and hypocrisy.

But wait: God Himself says the people were seeking Him *daily* (v. 2). We don't even do that in our day. Further, they were keeping the "ordinance of their God" – by which we may assume they were making their offerings and sacrifices in a timely manner – and the "ordinances of justice" as well. They delighted in the preaching. Why, they even seemed to enjoy coming to the Lord every day with their worship and their offerings. These people seem *very* religious, do they not? Certainly *we* don't maintain such a frequency and tenor of worship in our day.

So what's the problem? Why is God emphatic that their sins should be exposed? And what sins is He specifically concerned to expose and condemn?

Reflect.

1. Why was it important that Isaiah expose the sins of the people? Should preachers do this in our day?
2. How do you think the people of Jerusalem felt about the worship they were offering God?
3. How can a person know when his religion is merely outward rather than inward and true?

We know that a trumpet is usually not so much heard as dreaded; it is not so much accustomed to bring pleasure as to inspire fear. A trumpet is necessary for sinners; it not only penetrates their ears but should strike their heart as well; it should not delight with its melody but chastise when it has been heard; it should encourage the bravehearted to righteousness, while it should turn the cowardly from their crimes. Maximus of Turin (d. 423 AD), Sermon 93.1

Search me, Lord! Is my faith truly inward and sincere, or am I...

Pray Psalm 77.

Asaph served during the days of Solomon, at the height of Israel's glory. But this psalm suggests a different scenario. Consider the state of the churches and of Christianity in our day as you pray through this psalm, and call on the Lord to revive and restore us.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 77 (*Leoni: The God of Abraham Praise*)

My voice to God shall rise; I seek Him on His throne.
In days and nights of trouble I seek God alone!
When I remember Him, then am I sore distressed!
My spirit faints and longs to find in Him its rest.

I scarce a word can speak, so troubled is my soul;
Yet I recall Your grace to Israel long ago.
I sing Your praise by night; my heart will meditate;
My spirit ponders all Your grace and wonders great.

O Lord, will You reject Your people without end?
Has favor ceased, are You no more our heav'nly Friend?
Your promise and Your love in anger are obscured;
My sin has turned Your hand away, Your beauty blurred.

Now let us call to mind Your deeds and wonders, Lord,
And meditate on all Your works and praise Your Word.
Full holy is Your way, great God of earth and heav'n,
To You, O God of strength and pow'r all praise be giv'n!

The waters and the deeps all tremble 'neath Your hand.
The clouds give forth, the sky resounds across the land.
Your lightning flashes forth and lights the earth around;
We feel beneath our feet the trembling of the ground.

Your way leads through the sea; Your path the waters parts.
Your footprints are to us deep mysteries in our hearts.
As then by Moses' hand and Aaron's law-filled voice,
You led Your sheep, lead us that we may all rejoice!

2 No There There

Pray Psalm 50.1-3.

The Mighty One, God the LORD,
Has spoken and called the earth
From the rising of the sun to its going down.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God will shine forth.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;
A fire shall devour before Him,
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.

Read Isaiah 58.3-5.

Reflect.

1. What was wrong with the people's fasting?
2. What was wrong with their *motive* for fasting?

Meditate.

In the pagan religions of the ancient near east, as well as of Greece and Rome, the gods could be placated and manipulated by going through one or another act of devotion. Think of the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel, trying to persuade their god to perform (1 Kgs. 18.20-26).

When Israel and Judah turned to the idols of the pagan nations, they transferred the pagan manner of worship to God as well. This is why the people of Jerusalem complained in verse 3. They had done their bit; now, why hadn't God come through for them? They were trying to manipulate God with their fasts, at the same time they continued in their sinful and oppressive ways (vv. 3, 4).

They kept up their religious practices, but it was all a trampling of God's holy courts in His view. In their worship and devotions, there was no there there.

This is not the kind of spiritual discipline that brings the grace and Presence of God to our lives. God deplores all outward signs of piety which are designed to impress Him or our neighbors (vv. 4, 5), or to gain some standing or favor with Him. He's looking for something other than mere ritual. He wants to see thanksgiving and repentance in our hearts, sincere faith in and love for Him, and a determination to serve others with the grace we realize in His Presence.

All of which the people of Judah and Jerusalem were lacking.

Prepare.

1. God looks on the heart while people tend to look on outward things. There is a caution in here for us with respect to our times of worship. Explain.
2. Recall Isaiah 1.13: "I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting." What is God looking for from our worship?
3. So, should we just give up fasting, since it seems so hard to do it right?

Through this kind of fasting and prayers, he says, you seek to delight your will and not mine, and, since you despise me, you say

on high, "Why have we fasted, and you do not see it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you do not notice?" Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 58.4-5

Let my devotions and all my worship be pleasing to You, O Lord, and guard me against...

Pray Psalm 50.

As you pray this psalm, think of God observing your devotions and your worship, and ask Him to give you a true heart of thanksgiving and a life of worship and service to Him.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 50 (*Austrian Hymn: Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*)

God, the Lord, the mighty Savior, summons all from east to west:
Out of Zion, rich with favor, shines He, of all things the best.
Come, O God, and keep not silence; fire devours before Your way!
He His Church, steeped in defiance, comes to judge this awful day.

"Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood."
Let the heav'ns declare His glory, for the Lord Himself is Judge:
"Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!
I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

"Not for rituals I accuse you – let your worship to Me rise.
Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.
All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.
Offer Me no vain oblation: hear what I from you desire:

"Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;
Let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.
In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.
Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

"All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother's son!
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.

"Reckon this, My sinful people, lest My wrath consume you whole:
None shall thwart Me when I seek to crush and break your sin-stiff soul.
He who thanks to Me addressing, follows after what is good,
He shall know the way of blessing coming from the hand of God."

3 Devotion and Life

Pray Psalm 72.12-15.

For He will deliver the needy when he cries,
The poor also, and *him* who has no helper.
He will spare the poor and needy,
And will save the souls of the needy.
He will redeem their life from oppression and violence;
And precious shall be their blood in His sight.
And He shall live;
And the gold of Sheba will be given to Him;
Prayer also will be made for Him continually,
And daily He shall be praised.

Read Isaiah 58.6-9.

Reflect.

1. How can you see that our spiritual disciplines are not to be considered as ends in themselves?
2. Why are spiritual disciplines – like fasting – so very important?

Meditate.

The focus of these verses is fasting, because fasting was practiced by many of God's people in Isaiah's day. But fasting here is being used to stand for all spiritual practices – prayers, offerings, and so forth – such as have been mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The focus here is probably on the leaders of God's people. They were treating their spiritual lives as ends in themselves. For them, it was enough that they should have prayed, or made their offering, or fasted. God should have honored those works as sufficient to send His blessings.

But these spiritual exercises were having no impact on their lives, as we see from verses 1-5. They were not fitting these leaders to love their neighbors or to shepherd the Lord's flock as they should have.

God rejects their devotions, telling them that spiritual disciplines, rightly practiced, lead to sharing, burden-bearing, compassion, and other forms of good works (vv. 6, 7). The purpose of spiritual disciplines like fasting is to shape the inner person in God-likeness, so that the outer person of words and deeds will express the love and glory of the Lord. That simply was not happening, and so all those rigorous disciplines were all for naught.

But God does not reject disciplines *per se*. He promises that, when they are rightly done, not only will they issue in love for our neighbors, but God will show His Presence, favor, and healing power to and through us, and He will readily respond to our every cry for help (vv. 8, 9). Because He is ever ready to glorify Himself through His people, when their hearts are rightly focused and daily exercised for loving Him and their neighbors.

Prepare.

1. How would you describe your current practice of spiritual disciplines? Are they fitting you to love God and your neighbor?
2. Why do we need to practice spiritual disciplines? Which are the most important disciplines?

3. How can we tell when our practice of disciplines is beginning to be for naught? What should we do then?

Do you see, dearly beloved, what true fasting really is? Let us perform this kind and not entertain the facile notion held by many that the essence of fasting lies in going without food till evening. This is not the end in view, but that we should demonstrate, along with abstinence from food, abstinence also from whatever is harmful, and should give close attention to spiritual duties. The person fasting ought to be reserved, peaceful, meek, humble, indifferent to the esteem of this world. John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), Homilies on Genesis 8.15

O Lord, help me to improve all my spiritual disciplines, so that...

Pray Psalm 72.

As you pray this psalm of the Kingdom, pay attention to the close connection between devotion and life. Ask the Lord to empower your times of prayer for Kingdom living each day.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 72.7-14 (*Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed*)

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures;

Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low;

Let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Lord the needy rescues when he cries to Him for grace;

All they who suffer violence find mercy before His face.

4 True Spirituality

Pray Psalm 146.1, 2.

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

While I live I will praise the LORD;

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

Read Isaiah 58.10-12.

Reflect.

1. What does God promise to those whose souls are in line with Him?
2. Why must the good we do in Jesus' Name begin in our souls? How can we make sure that's the case?

Meditate.

Notice that the works God approves begin in the soul (v. 10). The purpose of spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, is to shape our soul to line up with God and His will. We must learn to *think* with God's Word; to *feel* with His compassion and love and zeal; and to *value* and *prioritize* according to His agenda. If we will work hard on our souls as we practice spiritual disciplines, the *life* God wants for us will flow like living waters that never fail (v. 11).

Look around you: In your sphere of influence – your Personal Mission Field – are people who hunger for someone to listen; who need some advice to help them see the light for their way; and who are looking for an example of love and good works to emulate (v. 10). If we get our souls in good working order, we can be those people.

And when we do, God comes to refresh and renew our souls, and to guide us for more of the same (v. 11)! We can become like springs of living water to the people around us (Jn. 7.37-39). Soon enough, this becomes habitual, and we are people known as builders, repairers, and restorers to all the people around us (v. 12). This is what God's people in Isaiah's day were failing to do, because they had given their hearts, minds, and consciences to the worship of created things, rather than to the Lord.

It all begins in the soul, and how we invest our time, attention, and effort to bringing our soul into submission to God and His Word. This is true spirituality, and true Christian faith.

Prepare.

1. Where have you seen progress lately in the shaping of your soul for serving others?
2. God is looking for sincere inside-out people to be His agents of renewal. Explain.
3. What's one thing you can do to begin bringing more focus and fruitfulness to your spiritual disciplines?

Their soul became like a lush garden, that is, luxuriant and tree-filled and with many types of flowers abounding and providing all sorts of fruit. For gardens that lack water are exceedingly ugly, being dry and barren of all fruit... For just the hardiest among trees has the most beautiful fruit, so also fairest and finest virtues exist in God's sight among the souls of the saints. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD), Commentary on Isaiah 5.4.58.11

Cleanse, shape, and strengthen my soul, O Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 146.

Praise the Lord; renew your trust in Him alone; and ask God to show you how you can be an agent of His grace to those who need help or hope, or those who are lonely, lost, or looking for comfort.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 146 (*Hallelujah! What a Savior!: Man of Sorrows*)

Praise the Lord, my soul, give praise! While I live, His Name I'll raise!
And exalt Him all my days – God forever reigns in Zion!

Trust we not in prince or man – no salvation's in their hand.
Death shall take them, breath and plans – God forever reigns in Zion!

Blessed are they whose hope resides in the Lord, Christ at His side.
By Him heav'n and earth abide – God forever reigns in Zion!

He is faithful evermore; He gives justice to the poor,
feeds the hungry from His store – God forever reigns in Zion!

Jesus sets the pris'ner free, heals blind eyes that they may see,
lifts those burdened painfully – God forever reigns in Zion!

He the righteous loves the best; wand'ers in His grace are blessed;
needy ones in Him find rest – God forever reigns in Zion!

But the wicked who defame His eternal blessèd Name,
them He brings to ruin and shame – God forever reigns in Zion!

5 Sabbath Shalt Notes

Pray Psalm 122.1, 2.

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”
Our feet have been standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!

Read Isaiah 58.13.

Reflect.

1. Why does God refer to the Sabbath as His “holy day”?
2. What are God’s people *not* supposed to do on the Sabbath?

Meditate.

Accompanying the Ten Commandments in the Law of God are a great many statutes and rules that help to tease out the implications and applications of the Commandments. There are hundreds of these, and many of them are cited in the New Testament as having continuing validity.

Of all those many hundreds of statutes, precepts, rules, and protocols, only one begins with the Hebrew word, אִשָּׁר, *ach*, which means, *surely* or *no doubt* or *above all* or *only*. It is an emphatic adverb meant to set what follows apart for special consideration. Here’s the precept that is introduced by this word: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: Surely [אִשָּׁר] My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you’” (Ex. 31.12, 13).

God was serious about keeping the Sabbath, but the people of Israel and Judah were not. God said it was “My holy day” – a day He specifically had set apart for Himself, to help His people in becoming a sanctified people. It was the Sabbath, the day of rest, a day for resting from normal work and other occupations to focus all the day on the Lord. In the Law, two reasons are given for God’s setting the Sabbath apart as holy, and they suggest how God wanted His people to spend that day. The Sabbath reminds us that God is Creator of all time, and everything else, and thus can do with time as He pleases, including setting aside one day in seven for a holy day (Ex. 20.11). Also, God delivered His people from their captivity to sin to be His people, and on the Sabbath He expected them to reflect on the great privilege of their covenant relationship, and to grow in their sanctification for the week to come (Deut. 5.16).

But the people of Israel and Judah decided they knew better than God how to use His holy day. They “turned away” from His instruction and sought their own “pleasure” on the Sabbath. They were more concerned to “delight” themselves than to delight the Lord. They did their “own ways,” pursued their “own pleasure,” and spoke their “own words” rather than to focus on His.

Pretty brazen, huh? No wonder God added this offense to His indictments against the people of Israel. How could the people of God so easily have set aside *His* plan for *His* day so they could use it as a kind of “free day” for their own interests? אִשָּׁר!

Wait...

Reflect.

1. The Lord’s Day is the Sabbath for Christians. How should we use it?

2. How can you prepare for the Lord's Day so that you use it as He intends, and can thus gain the sanctifying benefits the Sabbath affords?

3. Why do so few Christians only keep half a Sabbath rather than the whole day? How do you suppose God feels about that?

As he formerly included under the class of fasting all ceremonies and outward masks, in which they made their holiness to consist, and showed that they were vain and unprofitable; so in this passage he points out the true observation of the Sabbath, that they may not think that it consists in external idleness but in true self denial, so as to abstain from every act of injustice and wickedness, and from all lusts and wicked thoughts. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Isaiah 58.13

Lord, help me to see the many benefits that You have in store for those who honor Your holy day, so that I...

Pray Psalm 122.

Use this psalm to reflect on your use of the Lord's Day.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 122 (*Nettleton: Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

I was glad when they said to me, "To the Lord's house let us go!"

Holy City, let our feet be firmly planted in your soil.

Jesus builds His Church forever, where His people sing His praise!

As Your Word decrees forever, we will thank You all our days.

On the throne of David, Jesus sits to judge the nations all.

As our holy peace increases, we are safe who on You call.

Grant us peace, Lord, by Your favor; for Your people's sake we pray.

For the Church's sake, O Savior, we will seek Your good today.

6 Sabbath Promises

Pray Psalm 96.7-9.

Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Give to the LORD glory and strength.
Give to the LORD the glory *due* His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.

Read Isaiah 58.14.

Reflect.

1. Review verse 13. Two “turnings” are involved in keeping the Lord’s Day. Explain.
2. Summarize the three promises God makes in verse 14.

Meditate.

Israel had to make two “turnings” if they were going to honor the Sabbath as God intended. First, they would have to turn away from thinking they could do whatever they wanted, whatever pleased them on God’s holy day (v. 13). Second, they would have to put in place practices to remind them of God’s sovereign ownership of creation and time and His grace and salvation. Times of reading, meditation, singing and praying, joining in corporate worship – these could all fill the Lord’s Day with activities in line with His purpose.

And if Israel would do this, God promised three great blessings, and punctuated these by His well-known exclamation point: “The mouth of the LORD has spoken” (v. 14).

First, God promised that keeping the Sabbath as He commanded would lead to the people’s actually delighting in Him. God has saved us to know, fear, love, and serve Him, after all. It’s what fulfills us as His image-bearers. Would we not truly delight in the Lord if we devoted ourselves on His holy day to seeking Him, remembering His many blessings, exulting in His great power and victory, and meditating on His infinite beauty and goodness?

Second, God promised that they would realize the adventure of riding “the high hills of the earth.” Here we have to recall God’s promise in Isaiah 2.1-4, that His people would be the chief and most prominent of all the mountains of the earth, and people would stream up to it, seeking the Lord – if only they would keep His Law (Is. 2.3), “above all” (אָלְכֵם) His Sabbaths.

Third, God promised to feed them “with the heritage of Jacob your father.” What was that heritage? It was the heritage of God’s covenant, all the promises made to Abraham, and especially the blessing of a Kingdom brought in by one named *Shiloh* (Gen. 49.8-11). *Shiloh* is a Hebrew contraction of three words and means something like “Him Whose It Is.” To Shiloh is the Kingdom promised in Isaiah 9.6, 7, the Kingdom which will be given to the Servant, and which will stretch out to embrace the nations of the world.

All that if we would just keep the Lord’s Day?

We have His Word on it.

Prepare.

1. Summarize these three Sabbath promises in your own words. Do you desire these?

2. How complete are the two “turnings” you must make to enjoy these Lord’s Day promises?
3. How can Christians help one another realize more of the promises God attaches to keeping His holy day?

*And [here is] the confirmation of what he has just said: “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” The One who has made the promise does not lie, he says; he will undoubtedly grant you to take part in his beneficence, and you will enjoy the providence accorded to your ancestors. Theodoret of Cyr (393-466 AD), *Commentary on Isaiah 18.58.14**

Lord, set my heart to keep Your holy day according to Your will, so that...

Pray Psalm 96.

As you pray, contemplate the beauty of the Lord’s holiness and the greatness of His salvation. Give Him abundant praise and thanks.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 96 (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*)

Sing to the Lord! O, bless His Name! All nations tell His glory!
Salvation’s tidings loud proclaim; let earth rehearse His story!
For God is greatly to be praised; His throne above all gods is raised –
Fear Him, and sing His glory!

All other gods are idols vain – the Lord created heaven.
Splendor and strength with Him obtain; to Him be glory given!
All fam’lies, praise this mighty Lord! Give strength and glory to His Word;
Exalt the Lord of heaven.

Bring off’rings sweet to Him, our Lord, in holy garments praise Him!
Tremble before Him, all the earth; among the nations raise Him!
The earth is fixed, it will not move; the peoples will His justice prove –
Exalt the Lord and praise Him.

Let heaven sing with lusty voice; let earth and sea sing sweetly!
Let fields and trees in Him rejoice, for He is coming swiftly
to judge the world in righteousness, the peoples in His faithfulness –
He comes; exalt Him greatly!

7 Inside-Out

Pray Psalm 50.1-3.

The Mighty One, God the LORD,
Has spoken and called the earth
From the rising of the sun to its going down.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God will shine forth.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;
A fire shall devour before Him,
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.

Review Isaiah chapter 58.

Reflect.

1. Fasting and keeping the Lord's Day are spiritual disciplines. What are spiritual disciplines? What are they for?
2. What was Israel's basic problem where these spiritual disciplines were concerned?

Meditate.

The Christian life is lived from the inside-out. The outside – good works of love – is important, but only if it comes from a soul set on the Lord, submissive to His Word, and shaped by His Spirit.

This is what the people of Judah and Jerusalem lacked. They could point to their many religious observances, but every one of them was compromised because the set of their souls was on themselves, and not on the Lord.

Two things are important where spiritual disciplines such as fasting and Sabbath-keeping are concerned. First, we must be diligent to attend to them. God has given us these exercises and practices – prayer, His Word, solitude, singing, fasting, the Lord's Day, meditation, and so forth – because these are the fuel for souls that grow in the knowledge of God. Just like we attend to the needs of our body each day, we need to attend to the shaping of our souls by bringing them under the various disciplines the Lord has provided for their growth in holiness.

Second, we must guard against our disciplines becoming merely outward performances, items on a check list that let us think we're doing pretty well. Waiting on the Lord in silence and contemplation is the best way to ensure that our disciplines will not be perfunctory, but powerful to shape us into the image of Jesus Christ.

Fast, keep the Lord's Day, and practice all the other disciplines God has provided to nurture your soul. And do them always as unto the Lord. Then what emanates from your life will be the pure goodness and holiness of the Lord, at work within and through you for His good pleasure.

Prepare.

1. What would you do to help a new believer get started in a regimen of spiritual disciplines?
2. How can you tell when your disciplines are slipping from powerful to perfunctory? What should you do then?

3. What's your primary takeaway from Isaiah 58?

[Isaiah] brings them back to the true observation of the Sabbath, and shows that it will be well with them, if they shall worship God in a right manner. At length he concludes that they have not to deal with a mortal man, but that he who pronounces these things is God the Judge. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Isaiah 58.14

Thank You, Lord, for showing us the best ways to grow in You. Help me to improve in my disciplines as I...

Pray Psalm 50.

As you pray this psalm let the Lord search your heart. Give thanks for all His abundant goodness, and ask Him to be with you throughout the course of this day.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 50 (*Austrian Hymn: Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*)

God, the Lord, the mighty Savior, summons all from east to west:
Out of Zion, rich with favor, shines He, of all things the best.
Come, O God, and keep not silence; fire devours before Your way!
He His Church, steeped in defiance, comes to judge this awful day.

“Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood.”
Let the heav’ns declare His glory, for the Lord Himself is Judge:
“Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!
I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

“Not for rituals I accuse you – let your worship to Me rise.
Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.
All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.
Offer Me no vain oblation: hear what I from you desire:

“Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;
Let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.
In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.
Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

“All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother’s son!
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.

“Reckon this, My sinful people, lest My wrath consume you whole:
None shall thwart Me when I seek to crush and break your sin-stiff soul.
He who thanks to Me addressing, follows after what is good,
He shall know the way of blessing coming from the hand of God.”

The Way of Restoration: Isaiah 58

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What are spiritual disciplines? Why are they important?
2. How can we keep our spiritual disciplines and other religious practices from being merely outward?
3. Why is the Lord's Day so important to God? How can it begin to be more important for us?
4. How would you describe the state of your spiritual disciplines at this time? Can you see any areas for improvement?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Isaiah 58? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.