

November 4th, 2018  
"The Fast That I Choose"  
Isaiah 58

**BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN**

Oct 28 Luke 10-11	Nov 1 Luke 19-20
Oct 29 Luke 12-13	Nov 2 Luke 21-22
Oct 30 Luke 14-16	Nov 3 Luke 23-24
Oct 31 Luke 17-18	Nov 4 Luke John 1-2

**Lesson Introduction:** *The end of our passage last week revealed that, "there is no peace for the wicked." We saw that those who have been made righteous through Christ have the hope of eternal peace, but for those who have trusted in themselves, everlasting restlessness awaits. Our passage this week examines what some of those wicked lifestyles might look like. We will come to see that often times, those who believe they are secure with the righteous may actually find that their hearts have been set on wickedness instead. As we go, we will consider **misplaced motives**, and **that which is truly pleasing to the LORD**.*

**Key Memory Verses:** Isaiah 58:6

**FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:**

- **The LORD is not pleased by our attempts at self-righteousness, but by our deeds of love towards others, which overflow from a heart set on Him.**

**Isaiah 57:1-2, 14-21 (ESV)**

1 "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?  
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[b] 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;  
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.

### **Discussion Section 1: Misplaced Motives (V. 1-5)**

-What is the tone of **verse 1**?

-What is the primary sin being highlighted in this section?

-What was the motivation behind the fasting of the Israelites?

**Note:** *We see from the beginning of this passage that God is most serious about pointing out the sins of His people. He tells Isaiah to lift up his voice “like a trumpet,” as he declares the sins of the people. The sin that He is so eager to highlight is the sin of self-righteousness.*

*We see here that the LORD is confronting the way in which His people go about fasting. This may seem strange, as fasting is generally thought of as an act of faith and dedication towards God. Indeed, we should be a people who regularly set aside the things that consume us (or the things that we consume), in order to focus our attention on Christ. The problem here however, is the motivation behind the fasting of Israel.*

**Verse 3** reveals that the Israelite’s fasting was done with the expectation that God would owe them the response they were hoping for. Essentially, they believed that by practicing their religious traditions with enough gusto, they would prove themselves righteous, and be able to require God to do as they expected because of their self-righteousness. In other words, they did not fast in order to seek the LORD’s guidance, but in an attempt to strong arm God into doing what they wanted.

*While this may seem absurd to us, the truth is, many of us often operate in this way. We convince ourselves that we can convince God to answer our prayers the way we hope He will, so long as we do the right religious things. We say our prayers at night, go to church on Sunday, volunteer at the homeless shelter, and for all these things, we tell ourselves that we are good in God’s eyes, and that He will surely bless us for all of our religious commitment. As we will see in our next discussion section, the LORD is not pleased by this attitude in the least, but rather, He is honored by a humble heart.*

### **Discussion Section 2: That Which is Truly Pleasing to the LORD (V. 5-12)**

-What does **V. 5** tell us about God’s view of religious ceremony?

-What is the general summation of the fast chosen by God?

-Does simply taking care of the downtrodden make us acceptable to God?

-What does **V. 10** reveal about the heart of those who are truly covered by the righteousness of Christ?

**Note:** *The LORD makes clear in **verse 5** that simply participating in the ceremony of religion is not acceptable to Him. the use of sackcloth and ashes as an outward sign of repentance means nothing to Him, for He knows the heart (**Isaiah 29:13**). Thus, when we come to church, read our Bibles, pray before bed, or do anything else simply out of our desire to fulfill some religious requirement, our works are as filthy rags to the Him (**Isaiah 64:6**). Rather than such empty works, the LORD is pleased by merciful acts of love towards others, for indeed He desires “steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (**Hosea 6:6**).*

*A heart truly set on the LORD is described in this passage as a heart set on doing good to those in need. This serves as a stark contrast to the self-righteous behavior of the Israelites. We see that, the one whose heart is set on showing mercy towards the lowly, rather than building their religious resume, is the one who finds rest and provision from God (**V. 8-9**).*

*It is clear in Scripture that loving and serving others is mandatory for all who are God’s children (**James 1:27, Mark 12:30-31**). But does this mean that simply doing good deeds for the poor is sufficient for salvation? By no means! Acts of kindness toward the poor can also be attempts toward self-righteousness. It is in **verse 10** of our passage that we see what it looks like for a heart changed by the Spirit of God to truly offer sacrificial love. We see there, that pleasing God through our acts of compassion comes as we “**pour ourselves out for the hungry.**” This means that our good works toward the needy are not simply to check a box, but are truly acts of sacrificial love, giving of ourselves in all circumstances, to the glory of God, and not ourselves. A heart which operates in this way is a heart that has been changed by Christ, and one that is being molded to follow His example of humility to the glory of God (**Philippians 2:3-11**).*

