Isaiah 58 (BSB)

1“Cry aloud, do not hold back!
Raise your voice like a ram’s horn.
Declare to My people their transgression
and to the house of Jacob their sins.
2For day after day they seek Me
and delight to know My ways,
like **a nation that does what is right**
and does not forsake the justice of their God.
They ask Me for righteous judgments;
they delight in the nearness of God.”

(The people say)
3“Why have we fasted,
and You *(God)* **have not seen?**
Why have we humbled ourselves,
and You *(God)* **have not noticed?”**

(Then God Says)
“Behold, on the day of your fast, you do as you please,
and you oppress all your workers.
4 You fast with contention and strife
to strike viciously with your fist.
You cannot fast as you do today
and have your voice be heard on high.
5 Is this the fast I have chosen:
a day for a man to deny himself,
to bow his head like a reed,
and to spread out sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast
and a day acceptable to the LORD?

The people are outwardly eager to seek God, yet their daily conduct betrays them.
They delight in “approaching God,” but refuse to abandon sin.
While they go without food, they exploit workers, quarrel, and strike with wicked fists.

Q: Is it possible to earnestly seek to please God and still live in sin?

The Sin Offering (chatat) was the specific Levitical sacrifice required for sins committed unintentionally or in ignorance. (Leviticus 4-5)

Purpose: It provided atonement for inadvertent violations of God's commands, emphasizing that even unknowing sins defiled the sanctuary and required blood sacrifice for purification.
Procedure: The offerer laid hands on an unblemished animal to transfer guilt, which was then slaughtered and its blood applied to the altar or sanctuary.
Animal Requirements: The specific animal depended on the sinner's status: a bull for the high priest or the whole congregation, a male goat for a leader, and a female goat or lamb (or birds/flour for the poor) for a common individual.
Distinction: Unlike the Sin Offering, the Guilt Offering (asham) was primarily for unintentional sins involving restitution or trespass against holy things, while no blood sacrifice existed for deliberate, high-handed rebellion.

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Q: Why does God expect his people to fast and pray?

Asceticism is considered virtuous in ancient religions because it is believed to purify the soul, strengthen the will, and facilitate union with the Divine by suppressing bodily desires that impede spiritual growth. Ancient practitioners viewed self-denial not as an end in itself, but as a disciplined training (askēsis) to achieve inner freedom, clarity of thought, and moral virtue.

In the Old Testament, God explicitly commands fasting and abstaining from comforts only on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), as detailed in Leviticus 16:29-31, Leviticus 23:27-32, and Numbers 29:7.

On this annual occasion, the Israelites were required to:

"Afflict their souls", a Hebrew idiom meaning to deny oneself food, drink, and other physical comforts.
Abstain from all work, treating the day as a solemn Sabbath of rest.
Offer sacrifices for the cleansing of their sins.
While other instances of fasting appear in the Old Testament (such as Moses' 40-day fast in Exodus 34:28 or communal fasts in Esther and Ezra), these were voluntary acts of mourning, repentance, or seeking protection,

rather than direct divine commands to the entire nation. The Day of Atonement remains the sole mandatory fast prescribed by the Mosaic Law.

"Denying yourself food uses all the same spiritual muscles as denying sin" ~eh

Fasting reminds us of our fragility/mortality & our total dependence on God's provision.

6 Isn't this the fast that I have chosen:
to break the chains of wickedness,
to untie the cords of the yoke,
to set the oppressed free
and tear off every yoke?
7 Isn't it to share your bread with the hungry,
to bring the poor and homeless into your home,
to clothe the naked when you see him,
and not to turn away
from your own flesh and blood?

This is something far different than just skipping a few meals & saying a prayer!

Q: Based on verses 6-7 what does GOD say the focus of fasting should be?

8Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will come quickly.
Your righteousness will go before you,
and the glory of the LORD (YHWH) will be your rear guard.
9Then you will call, and the LORD (YHWH) will answer;
you will cry out, and He will say, 'Here I am.'
If you remove the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger and malicious talk,
10and if you give yourself to the hungry
and satisfy the afflicted soul,
then your light will go forth in the darkness,
and your night will be like noonday.
11The LORD (YHWH) will always guide you;
He will satisfy you in a sun-scorched land
and strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.
12Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins;

you will restore the age-old foundations;
you will be called Repairer of the Breach,
Restorer of the Streets of Dwelling.

When the people embrace justice and mercy, “your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will come quickly” (58:8). God pledges to answer when they cry.

Removing oppression, pointing fingers, and malicious talk brings renewed guidance and strength. The people will be “like a watered garden.” Ancient ruins will be rebuilt; they will be called “Repairer of the Breach.”

13If you turn your foot from breaking the Sabbath,
from doing as you please on My holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight,
and the LORD’s (YHWH's) holy day honorable,
if you honor it by not going your own way
or seeking your own pleasure or speaking idle words,
14then you will delight yourself in the LORD (YHWH),
and I will make you ride on the heights of the land
and feed you with the heritage of your father Jacob.”
For the mouth of the LORD (YHWH) has spoken.

Turning away from SELF on the Sabbath and honoring its intended purpose cultivates delight in YHWH and reforms us into the **Reconciliation Force** God intends for us to be.

Q: Based on Isaiah 58 - What kind of "worship" does YHWH accept?

Religious Hypocrisy vs. Humble Compassion for other image bearers

• Ritual fasting apart from compassion equals empty religion (cf. Amos 5:21-24).

• God links worship and ethics—vertical devotion must flow into horizontal love (Micah 6:8).

• Jesus echoes this principle in Matthew 6:16-18 - “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

The Pattern of True Fasting

Deny yourself to that the resources in your stewardship may be used to:

- Free the oppressed.
- Feed the hungry.
- Shelter the homeless.
- Clothe the naked.
- Care for family.

These five acts transform fasting from self-denial alone to active love & compasion.

Promises Tied to Obedience

• Light (v. 8) parallels Psalm 112:4 "Light shines in the darkness for the godly. They are generous, compassionate, and righteous."

• Healing recalls Jericho's spring healed by Elisha (2 Kings 2:19-22), symbolizing wholeness.

• Guidance "continually" (v. 11) matches Psalm 23:1-3. "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."

• Rebuilding ruins foretells a new Eden-like land, anticipating Revelation 22:1-5 "Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

Sabbath Observance

The passage shifts from fasting to Sabbath, binding together time set apart and righteous living.

• Sabbath as delight reflects Genesis 2:3 (blessed, made holy).

• Jesus affirms, "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27), emphasizing benefit, not burden.

• Hebrews 4 speaks of a "Sabbath rest" that foreshadows eternal fellowship.

Archaeological Insights

• Weights and measures from Persian-period Judah show commerce thriving; exploitation of laborers, therefore, was plausible.

• Excavations at Ramat Raḥel reveal administrative centers that could levy burdensome taxes—context for "oppression."

• Restored city walls—seen in Nehemiah's day—illustrate "Repairer of the Breach."

New Testament Echoes

• Luke 4:18-19 (Jesus' inaugural sermon) He quotes Isaiah 61 **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."**

• James 1:27 and 2:15-16 apply Isaiah-style religion: care for orphans, widows, and the needy.

• Acts 2:44-45 shows believers sharing possessions, fulfilling the fast God desires.

Practical Application

• Spiritual disciplines must overflow in mercy. Personal piety without neighbor-love grieves God.

• Social concern begins at home—"do not hide yourself from your own flesh" confronts neglect of family.

• Sabbath teaches rhythm: work, rest, worship, service. Making the day a delight reshapes priorities all week.

• Communities today can become "watered gardens" by blending worship, justice, and generosity—living evidence that God's light still breaks forth when His people fast His way.

INIVATION:

Fast Next Saturday, November 7th - according to what God leads you to do.

Communion and Pot-Luck on Sunday the 8th.

Bring a special anonymous gift to be donated to the Hwy 80 Rescue Mission.

Pray over the gifts & ask that God cultivate a heart of humble service within us.

ISAIAH 59 BSB

1 Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save,
nor His ear too dull to hear.
2 But your iniquities have built barriers
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden His face from you,
so that He does not hear.

The LORD's reach is strong and His hearing sharp, but the people's sins have erected a wall between them and their God.

Q: Jesus was given in sacrifice to pay our debts in full - So how does our sin still get in between us and God today?

Q: What does Christian Complacency look like? Does this glorify YHWH?

3 For your hands are stained with blood,
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies,
and your tongue mutters injustice.
4 No one calls for justice;
no one pleads his case honestly.
They rely on empty pleas; they tell lies;
they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.
5 They hatch the eggs of vipers
and weave a spider's web.
Whoever eats their eggs will die;
crack one open, and a viper is hatched.
6 Their cobwebs cannot be made into clothing,
and they cannot cover themselves with their works.
Their deeds are sinful deeds,
and acts of violence are in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil;
they are swift to shed innocent blood.
Their thoughts are sinful thoughts;
ruin and destructiona lie in their wake.
8 The way of peace they have not known,b
and there is no justice in their tracks.
They have turned them into crooked paths;

no one who treads on them will know peace.

Bloody hands, lying lips, twisted justice, and paths that breed violence show how deeply corruption has penetrated everyday life. **This is just as true today as it ever was.**

(The people testify)

9 Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not reach us.
We hope for light, but there is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
10 Like the blind, we feel our way along the wall,
groping like those without eyes.
We stumble at midday as in the twilight;
among the vigorous we are like the dead.
11 We all growl like bears
and moan like doves.
We hope for justice, but find none,
for salvation, but it is far from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied before You,
and our sins testify against us.
Our transgressions are indeed with us,
and we know our iniquities:
13 rebelling and denying the LORD,
turning away from our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering lies from the heart.
14 So justice is turned away,
and righteousness stands at a distance.
For truth has stumbled in the public square,
and honesty cannot enter.
15 Truth is missing, [John 14:5-6]
and whoever turns from evil becomes prey.
The LORD looked and was displeasedc
that there was no justice.
16 He saw that there was no man;
He was amazed that there was no one to intercede.
So His own arm brought salvation,
and His own righteousness sustained Him.
17 He put on righteousness like a breastplate,
and the helmet of salvation on His head;

He put on garments of vengeance
and wrapped Himself in a cloak of zeal.
The Covenant of the Redeemer
18 So He will repay according to their deeds:
fury to His enemies,
retribution to His foes,
and recompense to the islands.d
19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD
where the sun sets,
and His glory where it rises.
For He will come like a raging flood,
driven by the breath of the LORD.e

The nation (Judah) finally voices its condition: “Therefore justice is far from us… we grope like the blind” (v. 9–10). Truth falls in the streets; honesty cannot enter.

Seeing no human intercessor, the LORD arms Himself with righteousness and salvation, repaying foes and causing the west to fear His name and the east His glory.

> **John 14:5-6 "Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.”**

20 “The Redeemer will come to Zion,
to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,f”
declares the LORD.
21 “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,”g says the LORD. “My Spirit will not depart from you,h and My words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth or from the mouths of your children and grandchildren, from now on and forevermore,” says the LORD.

A Redeemer will come to Zion and to all who turn from transgression. The Spirit and the LORD’s words will remain on their lips—forever.

> **John 16:7-11 "But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s**

righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9in regard to sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will no longer see Me; 11and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world has been condemned."

1) Not trusting in Christ is Sin
2) Jesus returned to the Father as the sacrifice for sin - establishing human righteousness
3) The prince of this world has been condemned - So, abandon the World & it's corrupt rulership

Portrait of Sin

• "Hands are defiled with blood" (v. 3) – systemic violence.

• "Lips have spoken lies" (v. 3) – deceit ruining courts and commerce.

• "They hatch the eggs of vipers" (v. 5) – evil plans that poison society. [serpent!]

• "Their feet run after evil" (v. 7) – eager participation in wrong.

Paul quotes vv. 7–8 in Romans 3:15–17 to show universal guilt for ALL mankind.

Confession and the Turning Point

The people finally own their darkness (vv. 9–15a). They do not excuse but admit. Similar national confessions: Ezra 9; Nehemiah 9; Daniel 9. **Acknowledging sin invites divine intervention.**

The Divine Warrior Motif

"He put on righteousness like a breastplate" (v. 17). The Apostle Paul pictures believers wearing identical armor in Ephesians 6:14–17, showing our defense mirrors God's own. The same Warrior appears again in Isaiah 63:1–6 and Revelation 19:11–16.

Messianic Promise

"The Redeemer will come to Zion" (v. 20). Paul applies this to Jesus in Romans 11:26, linking Isaiah's pledge to the future salvation of Israel. Luke 4:18–21 shows Jesus announcing Isaiah's promises as fulfilled in Him.

Covenant of Spirit and Word

"My Spirit… and My words… will not depart from your mouth… from now on and forever" (v. 21). Echoes:

• Joel 2:28 – Spirit poured on all flesh.

• Jeremiah 31:33 – Law written on hearts.

The permanence of Spirit and Scripture guarantees guidance for every generation.

Archaeological and Cultural Notes

• Court Imagery: Ancient Near Eastern law courts placed elders at the city gate; bribery warped verdicts, matching Isaiah's charge that "truth is lacking." Tablets from Lachish Level III record appeals for fair hearing.

• Serpent and Spider Metaphors: Egyptian texts liken deception to weaving webs that trap the unsuspecting—ideas Isaiah harnesses for Judah's empty schemes.

Connections to Other Scriptures

• Separation by sin – Psalm 66:18; Micah 3:4.

• God's arm to save – Isaiah 50:2; 52:10.

• Justice fallen – Amos 5:7; Habakkuk 1:4.

• Fear of the LORD from west to east – Malachi 1:11."My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty."

• Everlasting covenant – Hebrews 13:20. "Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,"

Practical Application

1. Personal responsibility: God's power is never the issue; unconfessed sin is.

2. Social justice: Followers of Christ must ensure courts, businesses, and families reflect honesty and mercy.

3. Hope in the Redeemer: When human efforts fail, the LORD Himself steps in—ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

4. Embrace the covenant: Hold fast to Scripture and rely on the Holy Spirit; they are God's permanent gifts to His people.

Key Words and Images

• Arm of the LORD – strength, readiness to act.

• Redeemer (Hebrew go'el) – next-of-kin who rescues.

Summary & Reflection:

1 Corinthians 2:9-14

> **9 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" — the things God has prepared for those who love him—**
> **10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.**
> **11 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.**
> **12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.**
> **13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.**
> **14 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.**