

SPIRITUAL WEALTH

BIBLE TEXT : Isaiah 58:1-14.

LESSON 368 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Isaiah 58:1-14

¹ Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.

² Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

³ Wherefore have we fasted, *say they*, and thou seest not? *wherefore* have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.

⁴ Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day, to make your voice to be heard on high.

⁵ Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

⁶ *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?

⁷ *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Attention

When Isaiah the Prophet said, "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet," he meant, "Sound the bugle," or "Sound the alarm." A bugle calls people to attention. In the army, its blast awakens the soldier in the morning; another signal warns him of the enemy's approach; still another signal means "light out" in the barracks; another is sounded at the graveside of servicemen.

Why did Isaiah want to sound the "bugle call"? He was concerned about the Jews and wanted to show them their sins. Like a great many people of today, they were pretending to be something, which they were not. They had the outward show, but not inward holiness. They were going through religious ceremonies, but their hearts were wicked.

Prayer and Fasting

They prayed daily and fasted often. Surely God would hear them, they thought. In the days when Jesus was on the earth some of the people disfigured their faces when they fasted, and stood and looked sad. Jesus called them hypocrites. He said when people fast they should wash their face and try not to show that they were fasting. The Heavenly Father is the One who knows when a Christian is denying himself food and spending much time in prayer. No one else needs to know.

When the Lord lays a special burden of prayer upon a person for a certain thing, he should fast. Sometimes the burden of prayer for a sick one or for an unsaved one is so urgent that one does not even think of food. The important thing is to do it sincerely and only for the glory of God and not to impress people.

Isaiah told the Jews: "Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." "Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" Isaiah said that true worship consisted of helping those who had heavy burdens, feeding the hungry, helping the poor, giving clothes to the naked and showing mercy and kindness. This, he said, was more important than making many loud prayers.

Someone may come to your door who needs not only something to eat, but needs to know about the Gospel. Talk to him about the Lord, invite him to church, give him a Testament or Gospel literature, and pray for him. Then the Lord will know that you are putting your religions into action. Then, when you call upon Him, He will answer, "Here I am."

Sincerity or Pretence

The Prophet says that if they will show mercy and kindness and have pity upon the poor, then God will be pleased with them, and when they cry unto Him, He will say, "Here I am." God hears the sincere prayer that comes from one who really needs help and has faith in God.

Let us remember that God knows whether or not we are in earnest. When we talk to God, we cannot say one thing and mean something else. Sometimes people deceive others – boys

thine own flesh?

⁸ Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

⁹ Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I *am*. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

¹⁰ And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness *be* as the noonday:

¹¹ And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

¹² And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

¹³ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words:

¹⁴ Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

and girls may “fool” their Sunday School teacher or “put something over” on their parents or even try to deceive a minister. But remember, “God is not mocked.”

Sincerity Rewarded

Oh, how wonderful it is to live close to the Lord and have an open heart and mind unto Him! Then when one gets down to pray, the Lord says, “Here I am.” In John 15:7, we read, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Oh, the peace that fills the heart of the one who walks close to the Lord! Isaiah compares such a life with a watered garden and a spring of water whose waters fail not. The Psalmist said such a person would be “like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:3). Can you not picture an Oriental garden with fragrant flowers, babbling brooks, fountains and springs of water, singing birds, winding paths and nooks, and the very peace of Heaven abiding there?

The Lord’s Day

One more instruction given in this lesson is to keep the Sabbath Day holy. One of the Ten Commandments given to the Children of Israel many years before the time of Isaiah was: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). The first day of the week became accepted as the day of worship immediately after Jesus’ resurrection, and has been observed by all true Christians from that time down to the present day. It is the day on which Jesus rose from the dead; it is the day on which he made His appearances to the disciples; it is the day on which the Holy Ghost was given, when the true Church was founded; it is the day on which the disciples met to break bread in commemoration of the Lord’s Supper, and brought their offerings to the Lord.

It is the Lord’s Day and we should honour it and keep it holy. All unnecessary work, buying or selling on Sunday, is dishonouring His day. Going for joy rides, swimming or pick-nicking on Sunday is doing “thine own pleasure.” We are told that if we will turn from doing our pleasure on this holy day and honour God, then He will be pleased with our life. He promises that He will cause us to “ride upon the high places of the earth” - – like a great conqueror riding in a huge chariot and travelling through the hills and enjoying the best of everything in life. Even though there may be some things that a Christian could use, he is content and happy, for he has Jesus; all his needs and a great deal more are daily supplied. He is seeking to lay up “treasures” in Heaven.

Blessings Unlimited

A veteran of the Gospel often tells in his testimony that when God saved him he had more real pleasure than ever before: He travelled more, he wore better clothes, he ate better meals and enjoyed life much more than before he was saved. Yes, the very best of everything in life is in store for the man, woman, boy or girl who serves the Lord with all his heart. But better still is the great reward that awaits him in Heaven.

Do you wish to be wealthy? Seek spiritual wealth. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

QUESTIONS

1. To whom was Isaiah speaking?
2. How often did they pray?
3. What did they do to try to attract God’s attention?
4. Do you think they were sincere?
5. What promises are given in this chapter to those who obey the Lord?

6. Can you paint a word picture of the one who obeys the Lord?
7. To what does Isaiah liken such a person? What did the Psalmist say of such?
8. What day is known as the Lord's Day?
9. What promises are given to those who keep it holy? (Isaiah 58:14).
10. Give ten reasons why a Christian is happier than a sinner.