



Scriptural Background: Isa 58

*"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 go free,
and to break every yoke?" Isa 58:6*

One of the most searching endeavors a Christian can undertake is to reflect on the degree to which his or her Christian activity – attending church, reading the Bible, donating money, etc. – comes from self-interested performance as opposed to sacrificial generosity. Isaiah 58 indicates that one of the secret tells is our words, attitudes, and actions toward other people!

Here Isaiah lays open the charge against those who are busy carrying out all kinds of religious service while simultaneously being cruel, short, and uncaring to those around them. In no small way does God denounce that kind of "godly" activity. Only when real fasting, the kind that includes refraining from self-centeredness in our dealings with others, takes place will incredible promises of restoration be reality (58:10b–14). The people who do such things will be called "Repairer of Broken Walls" and "Restorer of Streets with Dwellings." How can such a radical transformation of heart occur? Only in Jesus Christ, whose sacrificial death first sets *us* free from the bonds of wickedness, so we might freely live as He does. His living water (John 4:14, 7:37–39) restores us to the "well-watered garden" we were made to be (58:11, Gen 2:10–14, Rev 22:1–2).

Prayer:

LORD Jesus, how we need Your work on our behalf—Your very life within us. We confess that we can do even our religious things in hypocritical ways. But You said that anyone who believes in You will have Living Water flowing from within. So grant us Your Holy Spirit, that we might regard others as You have regarded us. Amen.