

SPIRITUAL WEALTH

BIBLE TEXT : Isaiah 58:1-14.

LESSON 368 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9).

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:

I The Vanity of Hypocrisy

1. The prophet was instructed to cry out against sin, Isaiah 58:1; **Ezekiel 3:18**

18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Ezekiel 33:9

9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

2. The people made a great pretence of righteousness, Isaiah 58:2, 3;

Isaiah 1:11-15

¹¹ To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

¹² When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

¹³ Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

¹⁴ Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*.

¹⁵ And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Malachi 1:6-8

⁶ A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

⁷ Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible.

⁸ And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 6:1-6

¹ Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

² Therefore when thou doest *thine* alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

³ But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

⁴ That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

⁵ And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

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*.

⁶ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Matthew 15:7-8

⁷ Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

Matthew 23:23

²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

II The Lord's Expectations

1. The Lord showed that a false profession was not sufficient, Isaiah 58:4, 5; Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 7:6; Titus 1:16; Revelation 2:1-5; 3:1-3, 14-19.
2. The mode of true worship was outlined for the people, Isaiah 58:6, 7; Deuteronomy 10:12, 13, 14; Malachi 3:10, 16, 17; Mark 12:33; Romans 13:10; James 1:27.

III The Rewards of True Righteousness

1. The guarantee of God's blessing followed the doing of God's will, Isaiah 58:8-12; II Chronicles 26:5; 31:21; Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 7:21; John 13:17; James 1:22-25.
2. Those who honour God and His Law are honoured of God, Isaiah 58:13, 14; Matthew 5:19; 10:32, 33; John 12:26; 14:23; Romans 2:6, 7, 10, 11.

NOTES:

Most Valuable

Have you ever meditated upon the thought: What is the most valuable possession that a person may secure in this life? Without doubt the gift of God's love — the salvation of man's soul through the redeeming merits of Jesus' Blood, shed on Calvary — is the greatest treasure obtainable by mankind. One can receive this possession only by repenting of and forsaking all sin believing on Jesus Christ as Saviour, obeying His commandments, entering into a covenant with God and living godly in this present life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Timothy 4:8).

On the other hand, the most worthless thing that mankind can possess is an empty profession of religion. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22, 23).

God's Indictment

The two above conditions of religion -- the right kind and the wrong kind — evident in our time, were in force also throughout much of the history of Israel. "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet," the Spirit of God directed the Prophet to write and proclaim. What was the purpose of the message? It was to show the people their transgressions, and "the house of Jacob their sins." God has always blessed the man who is true to Him; but God has always had controversy with sinners, those especially who call themselves God's children in spite of the sins in their heart.

Guilty or Not?

Before spiritual wealth can be realised, a man must have sin removed from his heart. It was a surprise to Israel to hear the

indictment of God that sin was present, and they answered the arraignment of the Prophet with a question, "Wherefore?" Had not the people sought God daily? Had they not delighted in knowing His ways? The people had supposedly asked God regarding the ordinances of justice, and they took delight in approaching God. They had fasted; they had afflicted their souls! Why, then, would the Lord charge them with sin?

The Prophet was faithful to his calling. He denounced a religion, which has the form of godliness without its power. All the while these people were trying diligently to observe the letter of their religion, they were openly engaged in the sinful pleasures of life. They had no consideration for the comforts of their fellow beings. Strifes, debates, and fightings marred their days of religious observances. Their acts of worship were merely outward performing. Jesus cried out against a similar type of religion in His day: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward" (Matthew 6:16).

True Worship

God would not accept Israel's surface religion; and God's expectation of those who would truly serve Him are no less exacting in these days. The words that Jesus spoke to Nicodemus are applicable to all men: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). True worship is not just talk and ritual, but true worship is obedience to every word of God. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. . . . whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25). Faith and works grow together in the heart and life of the true Christian — they are inseparable.

One student of the Bible likened faith and works in the Christian's life to the evergreen pine and fir trees of the western hemisphere. Faith was likened to the roots of the tree, works likened to the trunk, branches, and needles of the tree. The life of the trunk, branches, and needles above the ground depends upon the root of the tree below the ground; likewise the life of the root below the ground depends upon the trunk, branches and needles of the tree above the ground. If the tree should be cut off, both the tree and the root perish, for the one cannot live without the other. So also is faith and works in the life of the Christian. Both must be present, for one cannot live independently of the other.

God's Love

The love of God for the people of Israel can be felt as His instructions and expectations are read. God proclaimed His promise that if the people would perform their acts of religion from the heart, observing the spirit as well as the letter of the Law, God would receive them. There would be no end to the blessings God would pour out. The Children of Israel would know spiritual wealth, indeed. The Lord showed the people their acts with which He was displeased, then He outlined the manner of worship that He would bless.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness" — depart from wickedness by sincere repentance, and worship God in spirit and in truth, rather than by the cold form and ceremony that had been practised.

"To undo the heavy burdens." The burdens of life sometimes become very heavy, but we can help undo rather than add to the

burdens of others. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

"To let the oppressed go free." The Children of Israel were guilty at times of oppressing the strangers and the poor who lived in the land. God condemned this practice. Men have at times oppressed Christians by persecution, by slander and evil talk; or gossip has been listened to and passed on to others. These are things with which God is displeased; and the one who worships God in truth must be free from these things.

"That ye break every yoke." Perhaps the Lord included the oppressed servants of the Israelites of Isaiah's day, but He surely was thinking of the servants of Satan today, also. A Christian life lived before sinners, a word of Christian testimony, or a song of Christian hope and gladness are often used of the Lord to cause sinners to take hope and action toward God's proffered salvation, thereby finding freedom from the oppression and yoke of the devil. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (I Peter 3:15).

Yesterday or Today?

The Lord God is the same today; He changes not. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition" (I Corinthians 10:11). God's love is manifest to men in greater measures now than it was to the Children of Israel during Isaiah's prophecy. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Has God given promise that He will answer prayer today? The New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, abounds with such promises. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9). "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (I John 5:14, 15). Could anyone ask for greater spiritual wealth than these promises assure? God's chequebook of faith is open to all who believe, and that account will never be overdrawn.

The Sabbath

"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 pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 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" — true spiritual wealth.

Christians observe Sunday, the first day of the week, as the Lord's Day. The first day of the week was the day on which Jesus rose; it was the day on which he made His several appearances before His disciples after His resurrection; it was the day on which the power fell (Act 2), at which time Christ's Church was founded; it was the day on which the disciples met to break bread in commemoration of the Lord's Supper, and it was the day on which they brought their offerings to the Lord. True Christians throughout the centuries since Jesus' resurrection have felt that the first day of the week is God's chosen day in the new

dispensation, and they have added to their true spiritual wealth as they have observed that day in the spirit of the above instructions of God to Israel. Those who refuse to observe the Lord's Day have robbed themselves of spiritual riches that they otherwise would have obtained.

QUESTIONS

1. By what method was the Prophet to warn the people of their sins?
2. What was the spiritual condition of Israel at this time?
3. Why was the Lord not pleased with Israel's religious observances?
4. What did the Lord require before His blessing would visit the people?
5. Name at least five blessings that Israel would enjoy when they obeyed the Lord.
6. What did the Lord say about Israel's observance of the Sabbath?
7. What day of the week does the Christian keep? Why?
8. What is the most valuable possession that a person may have?
9. What would you consider to be true spiritual wealth?