

I. Intro

A. Text: **Is. 58:6-11**

*<sup>6</sup> “Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? <sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. <sup>9</sup> 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, <sup>10</sup> If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, Then your light shall dawn in the darkness, And your darkness shall be as the noonday. <sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you continually, And satisfy your soul in drought, And strengthen your bones; You shall be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail. (Is. 58:6-11)*

B. Series Overview

II. Body

A. Dilemma: Israel (Northern and Southern Kingdoms) had proven to be a people who were enjoying a time of prosperity and success.

1. Specifically in the Southern Kingdom (under the leadership of Uzziah, Jotham, and Hezekiah) Israel seemed to establish a level of piety toward the Lord.
  - a. But... injustice filled the land.
2. This people seemed to be consistent in their personal devotion to the Lord...
  - a. Sought the Lord daily. (v. 2)

*Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God. (Is. 58:2)*

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- i. Delighted to know the ways of God.
- ii. They were concerned with their personal standing before God & personal righteousness (**v. 2a**).
- iii. They asked for justice in their own lives (**v.2b**).
- 3. But they weren't experiencing the manifest Presence of God.

*'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' (Is. 58:3a)*

- a. God has not responded as we expected.
- b. Our devotion, allegiance and rightness before God seems to be doing nothing for our experiencing God among us.

B. Indictment Against a so-called Personal Justice That Ignores Social Righteousness

- 1. Sent (Isaiah) the Prophetic Voice To Uncover Sin

*"Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. (Is. 58:1)*

- a. Lift up your voice and howl. Cry the undignified cry (**v. 1.**)

- 2. Do righteousness and embrace justice before God (doing right by God), but deny justice on a comprehensive level.

- a. Specifically referring to fasting in this text, but the principal is a broad one.

- b. You're doing religious stuff before me, but...

*"In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers.*

*<sup>4</sup>Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness.*

*You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. (Is. 58:3b-4)*

- c. My people fast, but limit their fast to focus on their personal desires and personal gratification. (**v.5**)

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<sup>5</sup> *Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes?*

*Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the LORD? (Is. 58:5)*

- i. They afflict their soul.
- ii. They put on sackcloth and ashes.
- iii. They bow and mourn.

d. Note: Fasting is always married to the idea of mourning.

- i. Refusal to accept things as they are.
- ii. Refusal to stand by idly and accept anything but rightness and justness (not just theoretically, but experientially).

### C. Paradigm Shift

<sup>6</sup> *"Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? <sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? <sup>8</sup> Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. (Is. 58:6-8)*

1. Combine a quest for righteousness and justice (on a personal level) with an unquenchable thirst for righteousness and justice in the entire earth.
  - a. **Righteousness (tsedaq)**: the quality of being/doing what's right, just, normal; rightness, justness, of weights and measures.
    - i. Relational/ covenant term (to do right by the other party in the covenant).
  - b. **Justice (mishpat)**: The act of deciding a case (in court, or at the seat of judgment).
    - i. Involves Retribution (payback) and Restoration
    - ii. Making the wrong things right.

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- iii. Seeking out the vulnerable to restore them, empower them, liberate them.
- 2. Discern Righteousness/Justice on Social Levels
  - a. Righteousness
    - i. **Personal Righteousness:** Doing right by God.
    - ii. **Social Righteousness:** A people, a nation, etc. doing right by God and others.
  - b. Justice
    - i. **Personal Justice:** Being restored to right standing with God.
    - ii. **Social Justice:** Bringing a people to restored relationship with God and/or others.
- 3. Consider that the Consequences of Righteousness/ Sin are far-reaching.
  - a. **Personal rightness** before God impacts right doing to those around us.
    - i. Social rightness before God leads to a society that does right to its constituents.
  - b. **Personal sin** before God has social consequences for those around us.
    - i. **Oppression:** Personal sin that forces others to suffer the consequences for that sin.
    - ii. **Institutional Oppression:** Sin/ inequity that is woven into the fabric of a community. Does not need the intention of an individual to have consequences on others.
- 4. Human tendency is to limit righteousness and justice to the private (spiritual) realm (to neglect the social realm).
  - a. Do the same thing with the concept of salvation.
    - i. **Salvation (supposed):** *The personal restoration and deliverance from sin.*
  - b. We have a spiritually engaging gospel that is socially irrelevant to everyone outside the church.

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- i. **Salvation (actually):** *complete deliverance, complete rescuing, complete victory over sin and all the negative effects of sin (implies health, wealth, wholeness, well-being).*
- c. We enjoy being right with God (without doing righteousness and justice in the earth).

5. Jesus stood in direct opposition to those who limited righteousness and justice to the personal level.

<sup>23</sup> *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.* <sup>24</sup> *You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!* (Matt. 23:23-24)

- a. The Pharisees felt that godliness was limited to a personal thing without regard to its social implications (restoring others).
- b. Jesus promised to eternally condemn a personal justice that doesn't do anything about the social injustice around it isn't justice at all.

<sup>34</sup> *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: <sup>35</sup> for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; <sup>36</sup> I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’* <sup>37</sup> *“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? <sup>39</sup> Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’* <sup>40</sup> *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’* (Matt. 25:34-40)

- i. Poor (hungry, thirsty).
- ii. Immigrant (stranger, naked)
- iii. Outcast (sick, imprisoned)

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### III. Conclusion

#### A. The Legacy of Father Abraham: Justified by faith

##### 1. Act of Grace

- a. Descendants received justice by grace
  - i. Given the responsibility to forever consider that they were once poor, immigrants, etc.
  - ii. Were once oppressed and outcast.

##### b. Became Advocates for Justice in all the earth

#### B. The Church's Assignment: Justified To Cry Out for Justice (**Is. 58:8-11**)

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1. God is waiting to break in with righteousness that shines like the sun in the morning. (**v.8**)
  - a. Healing for the injustice of sickness.
  - b. Righteousness shall go before you.
2. You will call and God Himself will show up. (**v. 9**)
  - a. You will cry and the Lord will say, “Here I am”
  - b. If you extend a portion of your strength (soul) to satisfy the afflicted, God will cause your light to shine like the noon day. (**v.10**)
  - c. The Lord Himself will satisfy your soul. (**v.11**)