

Isaiah 58:1–8

#0111

Study Given by W. D. Frazee

The 58th chapter of Isaiah is referred to more frequently than any other by the messenger to the remnant. It is one that I know that is spoken of many times.

“Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” Isaiah 58:1.

Do people like to have their sins pointed out? Very seldom. When a man goes to see a physician because of some pain or distress, he’s glad to have the doctor find what’s wrong with him. Our Lord is the Great Physician. He is in the business of pointing out what our problems are. Let’s invite Him to deal frankly with us.

The people are not infidels or pagans. The second verse says:

“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” Isaiah 58:2.

Do they like to come to meetings? Oh, yes. They like to hear the Word of God preached.

“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. 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” Isaiah 58:3–4.

Usually, it takes quite a bit of interest in religion to get people to fast. Here are people who are fasting as well as praying. But they are not getting the answers to their prayers. They are not getting through to God. The problem was that their actions were not going along with their prayers. They seemed to be anxious to get God to hear them, but their purpose was to get God to do something for *them*. As you see, God was seeking to get them interested in somebody else. So He says:

“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? 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? 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 thine own flesh?” Isaiah 58:5–7.

Some of you have noticed in the press lately the threat of famine in many parts of the world. At least 10 million people are destined for starvation within the next few years unless something unprecedented happens. Our problem is that those people are not living next door to us. We all had something to eat today, didn't we? And almost everybody here could have had more if we needed it or wanted it. We may be poor by the standards around us, but if we were to take all the people of this world (what is it now? About four billion?) and divide them in two, do you know which half you and I would be in? The upper half. If we would take that upper half and divide it again and look at how much they had to eat today and the type of food, the houses they live in, the clothes they wear, do you know which half of the upper half we would be in? The upper half. Let's divide it again. Which half would we be in? The upper half. How far you could go with that, I don't know, but I'm certain of what I have said. That's something to think about, isn't it?

Here in this chapter where God is dealing with the things that interfere with prayer, He puts His finger on selfishness and covetousness, and notice that they are 'religious' people.

That wonderful little book *Steps to Christ* says that the drunkard is despised and told that his sin will exclude him from Heaven, but pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. This is the problem that God is dealing with here. God says:

“For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart” Isaiah 57:17.

What is covetousness? It is selfishness exhibited in greed, in wanting what God never intended us to have—in hoarding or spending unwisely and unnecessarily.

“Every selfish, covetous person will fall out by the way. Like Judas, who sold his Lord, they will sell good principles and a noble, generous disposition for a little of earth's gain. All such will be sifted out from God's people” *Early Writings*, page 269.

When the remnant church passes the close of probation, every selfish, covetous person will have been sifted out. And God is pleading with us to examine our hearts and get rid of these selfish traits. Do you know what God has given us to help us with this problem of selfishness and covetousness? He's given a program of continual giving.

Someone says, "I wonder if Brother Frazee is going to take an offering tonight."

Well, I hadn't thought of it. We'll take one if you wish, but that isn't my subject. My heart is longing that you and I shall enter into a closer fellowship with Jesus. And you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor that we, through His poverty, might be rich. He is the only one ever born on this planet who had the opportunity to choose His place before He lived here. And as He and His Father talked it over, although He could have chosen any place, He chose extreme poverty, not for a few days merely, but throughout His entire life here on earth.

After He had spent 30 years in a poor home, He graduated from that into an experience where He had no home at all.

"Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" Matthew 8:20.

What inducements did Jesus offer men to join His work? None. But He got a tax collector to leave government service and come and unite with Him. He didn't tell Matthew that he would have greater pay and shorter hours. He didn't offer Matthew any contract at all. Matthew shared the poverty of his Lord and gave his whole life in sacrificial service and finally died a martyr.

Eleven out of those twelve men who were in Jesus' inner circle of sacrifice and service stayed with Him their whole life. One man was sifted out. What was his name? Judas. What did he get for it? Thirty pieces of silver. He came back in a few hours and threw those pieces of silver down and went out and died a suicide.

What God is interested in is not our money or our service. He is interested in our learning the experience of loving His way of life. Everybody in this world belongs to one of two classes of people. I'm not talking about the big people and the little people. I'm not talking about the rich people and the poor people. I'm not talking about the religious and the irreligious people. No. I'm talking about people who live by one of two philosophies. One is the philosophy of getting for self; the other is the philosophy of giving for others. Those are the two great principles. Which appeals to you? Interestingly enough, this planet is the only place where people have selfishness. This is the only place where people are thinking in terms of getting, hoarding, accumulating, instead of giving. In Heaven, people are giving. Out on the other planets, all through space, they're giving, giving, giving. That's what keeps life going and growing and glowing. It is this spirit of love manifested in giving.

Now, many people like to write or hear songs about it, poems about it, books about it. People even like to preach about it and hear sermons preached about it. But Jesus here in Isaiah 58 is putting His finger on the problem of living it. And so, He says, Instead of thinking that you're going to get Me on your side by praying and coming to meeting and even fasting, He says, Remember, the fast that I have chosen, the religious earnestness that I am looking for, is manifested in loosing the heavy burdens, making things easier for people around you instead of hard, breaking every yoke, dealing your bread to the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to your house, clothing the naked.

“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 thine own flesh?” Isaiah 58:7.

That seventh verse is a very practical verse, isn't it? You notice it deals with three great problems: the problem of hunger, the problem of the need for shelter, the problem of the need for clothing.

I'm sure that if every one of us here were suddenly dropped in Africa or India or other parts of the world where there is so much suffering and hunger, I'm sure that we would want to do something at once about it. Shall we let distance separate us from the reality of the need?

My purpose tonight is not to take up an offering for any purpose except the offering of our hearts. God is a great Manager. He is a great strategist. He has put you and me where we are for the purpose of developing in us an unselfish character. And somewhere around where we live, in the house where we live, in the church where we worship, in the community where we mingle, somewhere there are people who need help. It may be physical; it may be help of another character. They may need someone to care for them in their problems of mind and heart. They may need to know how to solve their problems.

Abundance creates problems as well as poverty. I think of that millionaire who got into his private plane at the London airport and told the pilot to take him to Paris. When they got out over the English Channel, he opened the door and dropped into the cold waters of the sea—a suicide. A millionaire? Yes.

Our government in recent years has abundantly demonstrated that pouring out millions, billions, of dollars does not make people happy. No. So God is looking for people who will help their neighbors and friends with the problems that they have. It may be the problems of affluence rather than that of poverty. It may be the problems that come from having lots of money rather than not having it. It may be the problem of what to do with all the food that is so abundant around us.

In spite of the opportunities to get food that most people have, nine out of ten families in America are not properly nourished. Not because they lack money, but

because they lack the knowledge to know how to spend the money, or they lack the will to control their appetites.

All of these problems are opportunities for you and me to share with others what God has shared with us, not merely in food and clothing, but in knowledge, information, instruction, education, and most of all, in simply caring for people, having an interest in them, and showing that interest in a practical way.

Most know the name of Fritz Chrysler, the famous violinist. A single evening's performance would bring him more money than most people earn in a whole year. But I want to share with you some things he said, looking back over his experience:

"I was born with music in my system. I knew musical scores instinctively before I knew my ABCs. It was a gift of providence. I did not acquire it, so I do not even deserve thanks for the music. Music is too sacred to be sold, and the outrageous prices the musical celebrities charge today truly are a crime against society. I never look upon the money I earn as my own. It is public money. It is only a fund entrusted to my care for proper disbursement. I am constantly endeavoring to reduce my needs to the minimum."

Isn't that quite a statement? What does minimum mean? Just as little as a person can get by on. Nine people out of ten, as their income increases, what else increases? Their needs. Someone has said that in order to know what the average family needs, take their income and add ten percent. It would be ridiculous if it weren't so tragic, wouldn't it? Do you know that the debts that people owe today are more than all the debts that have been owed since the days of Adam up to this generation? We have accumulated more debts in one generation than the entire past history of the world. And most of it is simply indulging selfishness and covetousness.

Back to Fritz Chrysler's statement:

"I never look upon the money I earn as my own. It is only a fund entrusted to my care for proper disbursement. I am constantly endeavoring to reduce my needs to the minimum. I feel morally guilty in ordering a costly meal, for it deprives someone else of a slice of bread, some child, perhaps, of a bottle of milk. My beloved wife feels exactly the same way about these things as I do. You know what I eat. You know what I wear. In all these years of my so-called 'success' in music, we have not built a house for ourselves. Between it and us stand all the homeless in the world."

Fritz Chrysler must have been a mystic, a dreamer—not very practical. That's what some people thought Jesus was.

If some rich relative were to leave you a million dollars next week, how much would it change your style of living? God is looking for people who have so thoroughly learned this lesson of unselfishness, generosity, that increased income would only mean to them increased disbursements for the needs of others—for the needs are increasing. The world is more needy right now than it ever has been.

These lessons are needed even in work for the Lord. What we're dealing with is not primarily tangible things—money and property and food and clothing. We are thinking of those things, but we are thinking of the heart back of it: the unselfish heart that loves to share or the selfish heart that loves to get. Suppose that there is any selfishness left in me. But I don't suppose that many of us would dare to say that all the selfishness, all the dross, has been burned out. It can manifest itself even in the work of God. I read a statement from the messenger to the remnant. Listen to this very interesting statement:

“There is a sentiment among our people—opposed by some it is true, but held by many—that each one connected with God's service may be sharp, keen, and designing in order to make the best possible showing, indicating that his line of work is a success. Those who continue to hold to this idea will be bitterly disappointed when at the judgment day, they find that they have no place in the kingdom of God... Not one thread of selfishness is to be brought into any part of God's service in His work upon the earth” *Manuscript 96*, 1902.

Is it possible, then, for me to enlarge the circle of my selfishness so that it includes more than just me, but finds expression in my church, my institution, my department, my Sabbath School class, my band, my, my, my, whatever "my" is? Is it possible for that to happen?

Somebody says, “Brother Frazee, you’ve quit preaching and gone to meddling.”

This is what we are dealing with. It's not enough that I'm thinking about more than myself. God longs to have me interested in as much as *He* is interested in. That's everything and everybody. It's true He has given me responsibility for certain areas, but His purpose in giving me responsibility, whether it be in my home, in the church, or the Sabbath School class I'm responsible for, the institution I'm responsible for, or the department I'm responsible for, His purpose in giving me those opportunities is to see what I will do, whether I will try to gather and hoard and build up myself, or whether I will use that to help others needier than myself.

Is there any church in this world needier than the church that I'm connected with? If so, I'm in debt. Is there any institution in this world needier than the institution I'm connected with, the local church? If so, then I'm in debt to God. Is there any *individual* in this world needier than myself and my family? Then I'm in debt to God. And God entrusts me with money or with facilities, with training, or something, He entrusts me to

see what I will do. He is longing that I shall develop that spirit that Jesus had that caused Him to leave Heaven and come to this world. Why? Because there was *need* here. And He spent His whole life seeking to bless others. Can you do less? Can I undertake something smaller than that? Oh, no. What a shame it would be to use life in just seeking to enrich ourselves, to “feather our nest.”

Somebody says, “Of course, I don't expect to be a millionaire.”

Do you know that a poor man can be just as selfish as a rich man? A rich man can be just as covetous as a poor man. Did you know that? Covetousness is not how much a person has. It's the *spirit* he has. And a man who doesn't have a nickel in his pocket can be just as selfish and covetous as a man who owns 10 million. It is the spirit in the heart. And so, Isaiah 58 says if you want your prayers to be heard, if you want to enter into fellowship with Jesus, deal your bread to the hungry, bring the poor that are cast out into your house, clothe the naked, and don't hide yourself from your own flesh. In other words, remember those who are near to you. Don't look a thousand miles away and forget those that are right close to you. Not one thread of selfishness.

I was looking at the expression, “bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.” The modern version of that is send them to the Salvation Army or the charity hospital, someplace where they take care of problems like that. And if I'm rich, I'll give money to the community chest and the Red Cross, and they will look after that. And even if I'm rich or not, I pay my taxes, and the government will take care of that.

One of the greatest departments in the Federal Government today is the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The federal government had not one of those a hundred years ago. Did you ever stop to think that those are three great jobs the Lord gave His church? Did God give His church the work of health? Did He give His church the work of education? Did He give His church the work of welfare? We are reading it right here in Isaiah 58.

But because the church has largely missed its opportunities in these three lines, step by step the ideas of socialism have come in, and our government has been permeated and saturated with this until today, the church that wants to do what God said to do in health, education, and welfare finds itself looked upon as a competitor of the government. But there will always be room for the individual follower of the Lord who will minister to the needy and help others in physical and spiritual lines.

The Lord says to bring the poor to your house. One of the busiest women of the last century was Ellen G. White. She wrote more than any other woman writer in the history of the world. Besides that, she was a mother of four boys, a faithful wife, and a successful mother. She traveled and spoke in many places to thousands of people on temperance, on religion, on home training, on prophecy, and on spiritual life. She had many burdens, but she didn't get too busy to do what Isaiah 58 said. When Sister White was over 65, she wrote this:

“A lady who has just recently embraced the truth, who conducted a large dressmaking establishment, thought she would be able to take treatment at our sanitarium in Sydney, Australia, and then come to the school and be educated as a missionary. She remained there paying out her little hoard of means until she dared not remain longer. Then she went to the mission home where she was boarded for ten shillings a week. But money was going out and none was coming in.

“It was thought that if she could get into the quiet of the country, into the pure air... it would be beneficial to her. I invited her to my house, and told her to make her home with me, although we have to crowd up our family to do this. I could not see her pay out her last shilling for board. She is now located in my family, and is having all the opportunities she desires in riding out and sitting at my family board. She is treated as a member of my family without cost to herself of a penny. I thought Jesus would do just that. It has been thought that she would remain here for four weeks and then return to the city, but she will remain here just as long as she pleases. I tell her this is her home.

“We must do these works just as Christ would do them if He were in our place. We want to show Christian warmth and hardiness, not as though we were doing some wonderful thing, but just what we would expect any real Christian to do in our own case were we placed in like circumstances.

What rule is that called? The Golden Rule. Now notice this statement:

“Ten thousand times more prosperity will rest upon families and institutions who will work on these principles and thus represent the character of Christ.”

Someone says, “Brother Frazee, don't you think a person could get fanatical on that?”

Yes, I do. And if any of you get too close to that and you ask me, I will tell you if I think you're in danger. But there is no danger of anybody here drowning in the Atlantic Ocean. Do you know why? We are not that close to it. Before we get through to the end, we are going to get *real* close to it. This is the way the early church did.

I know there are dangers. I know there are people who impose and take advantage. They did of Jesus. He healed ten lepers, and only one of them cared enough to even come back and do what? Say, “thank you.” So it isn't strange if we find people who impose upon us, whether it's in the home, the institution, the church, or wherever. That's nothing new. But God has never stopped giving because people impose upon Him.

We need to remember that what some people need more than they need money or clothes or food or shelter, they need a loving heart that cares for them. This is the greatest burden I want to lay upon you tonight—the burden to care for people. Some of you have it, and you know what I’m talking about. I invite every one of you to enter into it.

I’d like to be very practical. I wish that everyone here tonight who knows God would settle it in your heart that you will carry a daily burden in prayer for at least one soul who does not know the love of God. And along with it, I wish that you would carry a burden in prayer and love for one soul who *does* know the Lord, but needs help that you can give.

In that wonderful book *Ministry of Healing*, we’re told on page 493 that we should regard ourselves as missionaries, first of all, among our fellow workers. We are thousands of miles removed from the heathen in distant continents. But right next to us—in the home we live, in the department we labor, or wherever God’s providence has placed us—there is someone who knows Jesus but who needs the help that you can give. Jesus sought to help every soul He came in contact with, but He spent special time in helping Peter and Matthew, James and Thomas, and Judas. He had selected them as those with whom He could, in a special way, share His love and care. God has someone that already knows Him that God wants to use you to help in prayer, in helping them to know the Master better, and in helping them to share with others what God has shared with them. And besides, God has someone that He wants you to reach that does not now know Him.

Will you do something for me? Take your hand and hold it up with two fingers. What are the two fingers? First, somebody that doesn’t know the Lord, and second, somebody who does know the Lord. Every time you see those two fingers for the next few days, I hope you’ll remember that.

Will you turn to the 142nd Psalm? David at one time felt so helpless and alone that he cried out to God:

“I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul” Psalm 142:4.

Anybody like that in the world today? All around us, people who feel, and some of them the *reason* they feel that way is because it’s *true*. Nobody cares for them. There may be someone here tonight who says, “Brother Frazee, that’s just the way I feel.” Well, my friend, *Jesus* cares for you, and *we* care for you. But listen, you will miss the blessing unless you pass it on.

Turn back to Isaiah 58, and I’ll show this to you. The people in Isaiah 58 were feeling so dissatisfied and restless, and they were coming to meetings, and they were

praying, and they were even fasting, and wondering why God didn't hear their prayers and bless them. God said, "The reason is: you need to share with others."

I want you to notice the wonderful thing in the eighth verse. What's that first word? Then. When? When you *do* this—when you care for others, when you think about others instead of your own little petty wishes and needs and desires:

"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. Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am..." Isaiah 58:8–9.

Oh, think of the spiritual blessings God is waiting to give us if we open the way! You remember that when the disciples came to Jesus and told Him that He had better send the multitude away because it was time for them to eat, and there's nothing around here, Jesus said, "Give ye them to eat." You are to feed them.

But they said, "All we have is just this little bit a boy has."

"Never mind," Jesus said, "bring it here."

So He blessed the five loaves and told the disciples to start feeding the people. As they did, when they got all through, there was more left than there was to begin with.

Someone says, "If I could work miracles like that, I'd give away too."

It's the other way around. You will never get the power to work miracles until you have learned that lesson thoroughly. Never. The miracles will never teach you that lesson. They are worked by those who have already learned this lesson of utter unselfishness.

So, if we will do this, Jesus says He will hear us and bless us.

I want to ask you a question: Is there anyone here who, as you've heard these things from Isaiah 58, and the truths that have come with these verses, the Lord has impressed you that there's a lesson you need to learn. It may be something that I don't know anything about. It may be something that God has been talking to your heart in the quiet of this vesper hour.

May I tell you truly, friends, I long to see everybody here happy, and I know there is only one way to be happy—utter unselfishness. Not that I think that I'm getting anybody into a miserable experience, not so. I know that this is the way of peace, the way of joy, the way of real satisfaction. But it isn't something you can play a game with. It isn't something that you can make believe and act on the stage. It isn't a mask that you can put on and take off. It must be an experience that comes in the heart.

“When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet?
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Since I who was undone and lost
Have pardon through His name and word
Forbid it, then, that I should boast
Save in the cross of Christ my Lord.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all.”

And so I say to you: is there somebody here tonight (and I want to be practical and specific), somebody who knows that God has spoken in the silence of your own heart to you about something that He wants to be different. And no matter how the surgery may hurt, you're signing your release to the Surgeon, telling Him to operate. No matter if it seems like taking the right hand or the right eye, you're saying, “Lord, take the selfishness out of my life. Take the self-caring out of my soul. Give me an experience like Jesus, that I find my real satisfaction in sharing with others that which God shares with me. And that becomes not merely a means, it becomes the great end of life to give, give, give, give. Oh friends, this is what God is calling for. Is there somebody that got that message and knows that God brought you here to get it? And by His help, you're going to do something about it? If so, would you stand right where you are?

Oh, how wonderful if Jesus can have all of us as His channel. He has plenty of help, He has plenty of love to pour through our hearts, plenty of money (if money is what it takes to solve problems), plenty of wisdom to deal with hard difficulties, He has all that it takes. He's looking for channels that are uncontaminated, unobstructed.

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