

ISAIAH LESSON 54

What is Real Religion?^a

(Isaiah 58:1-14)

Isaiah 58:1-14 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

False and True Worship^b

58 “Cry aloud, spare not,

lift up your voice like a trumpet;
declare to my people their transgression,
to the house of Jacob their sins.^c

² Yet they seek me daily,
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that did righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God^d;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.^e

³ “Why have we fasted, and thou seest it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it?”

Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.^f

⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.^g

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a man to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a rush,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the Lord^{h,i}?

⁶ “Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?^j

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?^k

⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.^l

⁹ Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am.

“If you take away from the midst of you the yoke,
 the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,^m
¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry
 and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
 then shall your light rise in the darkness
 and your gloom be as the noonday.ⁿ
¹¹ And the Lord will guide you continually,
 and satisfy your desire with good things,
 and make your bones strong;
 and you shall be like a watered garden,
 like a spring of water,
 whose waters fail not.^o
¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
 you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
 you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
 the restorer of streets to dwell in.^p
¹³ “If you turn back your foot from the sabbath,
 from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
 and call the sabbath a delight
 and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
 if you honor it, not going your own ways,
 or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;^q
¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the Lord,
 and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
 I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
 for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”^r

Revised Standard Version (RSV)

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STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Contrast this chapter, and in particular verses 2-3 with Paul’s description of the unsaved Jews in Romans 9:30-33.
2. Verses 2-5 describe certain practices of the people of Judah of Isaiah’s ministry. What practices of today’s Christians are analogous to those practices of Isaiah’s time.
3. Compare the fast described in verses 2-5 with the Sabbath of God as described in verses 13-14.
4. Who or what is the fulfillment or source of God’s promises to us in verses 8-11?

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^a **What is Real Religion?** Isaiah writes some of the best Hebrew in the Scriptures, and particularly the most beautiful poetry, not only in the way it sounds, but more importantly, in the sentiments that it expresses. This poem begins with God telling Isaiah to shout and blow the shofar to describe the sins of the seed of Jacob, and ends with God’s voice proclaiming the heritage of Jacob. This structure is how we know that it is intended as a single poem. In the middle of the poem is described how we get from the sins of Jacob to his heritage. In the later verses of this chapter (7-14) Isaiah is likely using the backdrop of the return to Jerusalem as a backdrop and object lesson that following in the ways God teaches, and keeping His Sabbaths, will comfort us, make us feel

God's presence with us, and help us to be a blessing to all humanity. While there seems no doubt that this passage is directed to the people of Jacob, that is, the Jews, and today by extension to those who are grafted into Jacob by faith in Messiah (Rm 11:13-24), some commentators assert that Chapter 57 was describing the sins of outsiders, though this would not seem to fit with the text itself which seem to clearly describe the idolatries of Judah (Is 2:6-22; 2Ki 12:3, 17:7-17; Jr 3:7-10).

^b **False and True Worship.** In the last major section of Isaiah, Chapters 56-66, a major theme or motif is the division of mankind into two groups, the righteous who are suffering, and the oppressors who will be judged. At the judgment, to be brought about by the Conqueror, the righteous will be restored. Even here amidst the promises of salvation, return from exile, and the prospect of a new Heaven and a new Earth described in the last major section of Isaiah, Isaiah included yet another warning to God's people to avoid hypocrisy, and to strive to do justice as we are given the light, combined with a promise that God will be with us in our task. Here Isaiah warns against insincere prayer and fasting carried on even while the poor are exploited (Is 1:10-17; Mt 23:13-36). For those who can worship truly, there will be healing and restoration. But for those who do not repent, there will be no peace.

^c (1) The *Targum of Isaiah* has Isaiah being the object of the command to cry out (Is 40:6; Jr 1:7-10, 1:17-19; Ti 2:15) the transgression (פְּשָׁעַ, *pesha*, or rebellion) and sins (חַטָּאתָ, *chattaah*, that is in the sense of habitual sinning) of Judah (Is 1:28, 24:20, 43:27, 48:8; Jr 2:3; Ezk 2:3-8, 20:4, 22:2; Mi 3:8; Mt 3:7-9) from which they had not repented (Ezk 3:5-9, 17-21; Ac 7:51-52, 20:26-27) and for which they had been, or would be, sent into Exile (Is 50:1). Those who should have been watching over Judah had not done their jobs (Is 56:10, 57:12; Jr 6:17; Lam 2:14; Ezk 3:17-21), and the nation had continued to sin. The sound of the Prophet's voice is likened to the sound of the trumpet (פְּרוֹשָׁ, *shofar*, or *shofar*, the rams-horn trumpet). In its first appearance, the *shofar* heralds the giving of the Law to Moses and the Israelites (Ex 19:13, 20:18). This metaphor is appropriate because the *shofar* is blown on the Feast of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*) beginning a season of examination and repentance and again at *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement or Expiation (Lv 25:9). It was blown by the priests during the siege of Jericho bringing about the collapse of its walls (Jsh 6:4). The blowing of the *shofar* will announce the return of the exiles to the Land (Is 27:13). It is associated with God's voice (Rv 1:10) or revelation (Rv 4:1), and will herald the return of the Messiah (Jl 2:1; 1Co 15:52; 1Th 4:16; Rv 8:7-13, 9:1-21). And its loud and compelling sound should grab the attention of those within hearing, in this case a long distance (Jl 2:15). Here the crying out, and sound of the *shofar* (Hos 8:1), is to be an announcement of the guilt of the people which may finally have resulted in understanding (Is 59:12), though elsewhere it will be with good news (Is 40:9-10; Ps 40:9-10; Hag 2:10-23).

^d **God - Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים), the plural form of the generic *el* (אֵל). See Note in the Introduction to this Study. אֱלֹהִים appears twice in this verse.

^e (2) In this and the following verse the people of Judah are pictured as carefully observing the religious rites, humbling themselves (at least outwardly) and claiming to seek God (Is 29:13, 43:26, 57:3, 59:13; Ps 119:15, 119:87, 119:150-151; Ezk 20:1), yet wondering why their prayers are not being answered (Mal 3:14). But the people surely know, if they have truly been paying attention to the Torah, that they have been disregarding God's commands regarding how they are to live righteous (צְדָקָה, *tsedaqah*) lives (Is 1:4; Ex 20:12-18; Dt 5:28-29, 32:15; Ezk 33:30-33). The failure in these weightier matters of the law (Mt 23:23-24) cause God to reject their outward observance (Is 1:11-15, 48:1-2; Pr 15:8; Jr 7:8-11; Hos 6:6; Mi 3:8-12; Zec 7:1-14; Mt 15:7-9; Rm 9:30-33; Ti 1:16; Jas 1:21-22, 4:8; 1Pt 2:1-2). Their question is, itself, part of the self-deception in which they protest, "What do you want from us God?" The answer follows but is also found elsewhere, "to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6:8). Some commentators, I think incorrectly, view the people of Judah as following the first tablet of the Law, the duties owed to God, but neglecting the second, the duties owed to other people. But as the Messiah said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Thus, the duties to God are inseparable from the duties to our fellow men. The LXX renders the Hebrew, "They seek Me day by day, and desire to know My ways, as a people that had done righteousness, and had not forsaken the judgment of their God; they now ask of Me righteous judgment, and desire to draw near to God . . ."

^f (3) God does hear the prayers of His people when they suffer (Ex 2:23-24, 10:3; Jr 42:2, 42:20) and the prayers are genuine (2Sm 12:22; 1Ki 21:12; 2Ch 6:37; Ps 69:10; Jr 15:19-20; 1Mac 3:47). But God will reject the prayers of the unrighteous (Gn 4:3-15; 1Sm 15:21-25; Pr 28:9; Jr 44:10; Hos 14:1; Heb 6:4-6) which do not come from the heart. While fasting and mourning may be appropriate for God's people in some circumstances (Is 22:12-13; 1Sm 7:6; 2Ch 7:14; Dn 10:2-3; Jl 1:1-2:17; Jnh 3:6-9), when the fast is essentially for the purpose of controlling God (Zec 7:5-7), it is of no avail. The people complain because God does not answer the prayers (Lk 15:29) made in accordance with the prescribed ritual (Mal 3:4). God answers the question by pointing out the hypocrisy of fasting and outward religion while at the same time oppressing those in their care (Neh 5:1-8; Jr 34:9-17; Mi 3:9-11; Mt 18:28-35, 20:11-12; Lk 18:9-12). In those days, and even today for those who take the Lord's commands seriously, one's workers, or employees, were members of one's household with duties of loyalty flowing in both directions. The master would treat his servants well (Is 60:17), provide for them, not overwork them, and protect them from others, while the servants would obey the master, remain loyal to him and protect him and his property. The people of Judah are described as

engaging in superstition, that is, the manipulation of forms to affect the unknown. This happens, and it is always a temptation, when we want to use God, or control God, to accomplish our own desires rather than seeking His will for us (Nu 23:4). The so-called prosperity Gospel falls most clearly today into this category, but there are other far more subtle examples. This is just the opposite of seeking a relationship with God. Fasting, or religious observance is not wrong in itself, but it should not be to control God but be in response to what God has already done for us. The only fast prescribed in the Books of Moses is for *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement or Expiation (Lv 16:29-31, 23:26-32). Other days of fasting were added later either to commemorate national disasters (Zec 7:1-14, 8:18-19) or to implore God's mercy (Jr 36:6-9; Jnh 3:5; 1Ki 21:9-12). The Augsburg Confession (1530), Article XXVI, 39-45 states, "THEREFORE, WE DO NOT CONDEMN FASTING IN ITSELF [Is 58:3-7], BUT THE TRADITIONS WHICH PRESCRIBE CERTAIN DAYS AND CERTAIN MEATS, WITH PERIL OF CONSCIENCE, AS THOUGH SUCH WORKS WERE A NECESSARY SERVICE. NEVERTHELESS, VERY MANY TRADITIONS ARE KEPT ON OUR PART, WHICH CONDUCE TO GOOD ORDER IN THE CHURCH, AS THE ORDER OF LESSONS IN THE MASS AND THE CHIEF HOLY-DAYS. BUT, AT THE SAME TIME, MEN ARE WARNED THAT SUCH OBSERVANCES DO NOT JUSTIFY BEFORE GOD, AND THAT IN SUCH THINGS IT SHOULD NOT BE MADE SIN IF THEY BE OMITTED WITHOUT OFFENSE. SUCH LIBERTY IN HUMAN RITES WAS NOT UNKNOWN TO THE FATHERS. FOR IN THE EAST THEY KEPT EASTER AT ANOTHER TIME THAN AT ROME, AND WHEN, ON ACCOUNT OF THIS DIVERSITY, THE ROMANS ACCUSED THE EASTERN CHURCH OF SCHISM, THEY WERE ADMONISHED BY OTHERS THAT SUCH USAGES NEED NOT BE ALIKE EVERYWHERE. AND IRENAEUS SAYS: DIVERSITY CONCERNING FASTING DOES NOT DESTROY THE HARMONY OF FAITH . . . IT WAS NOT THE MIND OF THE APOSTLES TO ENACT RULES CONCERNING HOLY-DAYS, BUT TO PREACH GODLINESS AND A HOLY LIFE [TO TEACH FAITH AND LOVE]." The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1530), Article III, 137-139 states, "THEREFORE, WHEN ISAIAH (1:16-18), PREACHES REPENTANCE: CEASE TO DO EVIL; LEARN TO DO WELL; SEEK JUDGMENT, RELIEVE THE OPPRESSED, JUDGE THE FATHERLESS, PLEAD FOR THE WIDOW. COME NOW AND LET US REASON TOGETHER, SAITH THE LORD; THOUGH YOUR SINS BE AS SCARLET THEY SHALL BE WHITE AS SNOW, THE PROPHET THUS BOTH EXHORTS TO REPENTANCE, AND ADDS THE PROMISE. BUT IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO CONSIDER IN SUCH A SENTENCE ONLY THE WORDS: RELIEVE THE OPPRESSED; JUDGE THE FATHERLESS. FOR HE SAYS IN THE BEGINNING: CEASE TO DO EVIL, WHERE HE CENSURES IMPIETY OF HEART AND REQUIRES FAITH. NEITHER DOES THE PROPHET SAY THAT THROUGH THE WORKS: RELIEVE THE OPPRESSED, JUDGE THE FATHERLESS, THEY CAN MERIT THE REMISSION OF SINS *EX OPERE OPERATO*, BUT HE COMMANDS SUCH WORKS AS ARE NECESSARY IN THE NEW LIFE. YET, IN THE MEANTIME, HE MEANS THAT REMISSION OF SINS IS RECEIVED BY FAITH, AND ACCORDINGLY THE PROMISE IS ADDED. THUS WE MUST UNDERSTAND ALL SIMILAR PASSAGES. CHRIST PREACHES REPENTANCE WHEN HE SAYS: FORGIVE, AND HE ADDS THE PROMISE: AND YE SHALL BE FORGIVEN (Luke 6:37). NOR, INDEED DOES HE SAY THIS, NAMELY, THAT, WHEN WE FORGIVE, BY THIS WORK OF OURS WE MERIT THE REMISSION OF SINS *EX OPERE OPERATO*, AS THEY TERM IT, BUT HE REQUIRES A NEW LIFE, WHICH CERTAINLY IS NECESSARY. YET, IN THE MEANTIME, HE MEANS THAT REMISSION OF SINS IS RECEIVED BY FAITH. THUS, WHEN ISAIAH SAYS, (Is 58:7): DEAL THY BREAD TO THE HUNGRY, HE REQUIRES A NEW LIFE. NOR DOES THE PROPHET SPEAK OF THIS WORK ALONE, BUT, AS THE TEXT INDICATES, OF THE ENTIRE REPENTANCE; YET, IN THE MEANTIME, HE INTENDS THAT REMISSION OF SINS IS RECEIVED BY FAITH. FOR THE POSITION IS SURE, AND NONE OF THE GATES OF HELL CAN OVERTHROW IT, THAT IN THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE THE PREACHING OF THE LAW IS NOT SUFFICIENT, BECAUSE THE LAW WORKS WRATH AND ALWAYS ACCUSES. BUT THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL SHOULD BE ADDED, NAMELY, THAT IN THIS WAY REMISSION OF SINS IS GRANTED US, IF WE BELIEVE THAT SINS ARE REMITTED US FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. OTHERWISE, WHY WOULD THERE BE NEED OF THE GOSPEL, WHY WOULD THERE BE NEED OF CHRIST? THIS BELIEF OUGHT ALWAYS TO BE IN VIEW, IN ORDER THAT IT MAY BE OPPOSED TO THOSE WHO, CHRIST BEING CAST ASIDE AND THE GOSPEL BEING BLOTTED OUT, WICKEDLY DISTORT THE SCRIPTURES TO THE HUMAN OPINIONS, THAT BY OUR WORKS WE PURCHASE REMISSION OF SINS."

^g (4) Is 1:15, 3:14-15, 47:6, 59:2, 59:6; 1Sm 8:18; 1Ki 21:9-13; Pr 21:27; Jr 6:7; Lam 3:44; Ezk 7:11, 8:18; Mi 3:4; Jl 2:12-14; Mal 2:16; Jnh 3:7; Mt 6:16-18, 23:14; Mk 4:16-17, 6:20, 12:14; Lk 20:47; Jn 5:35, 18:28; Ac 23:1-2; Php 1:14-15 The reference of this verse is unclear. Perhaps fasting put the people in a foul mood and led to quarrels and fights. Or perhaps the people used their time away from work to pursue pre-existing personal quarrels. Or perhaps quarrels and jealousies developed as people tried to outdo one another in the outward forms of religious observance (1Co __; Jas 2:1-7). In any event, rather than the fast helping the people to concentrate on God, it is taken over by petty quarrels and personal agendas. Thus it is not a fast to, or commanded by, the Lord, but a fast the people wanted to get something from God. The reference to a wicked fist may refer to unjustified physical assaults on the lowly including servants, debtors and resident aliens. Most English translations of the Hebrew view these fights as causing God to disregard the prayers and fasting of the people. But the Hebrew might also be translated, as in the LXX, to indicate that the sound of the fighting has reached God in Heaven, "If you fast for quarrels and strife, and strike the lowly with your fists, why do you fast to Me as you do this day, so that your voice may be heard in crying?"

^h **Lord** - *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah* (יהוה), YHWH), written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears here and in verses 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14 (twice).

ⁱ (5) Is 36:6, 49:8, 58:3, 61:2; Lv 16:29; 1Ki 21:27-29; 2Ki 6:30; 2Ch 20:3; Ezr 10:6; Neh 9:1-2; Est 4:3, 4:16; Jb 2:8, 16:15; Ps 50:19, 69:13; Dn 9:3-19; Jnh 3:5-8; Zec 7:5, 8:19; Mt 6:1, 6:16-18; Lk 4:19; Rm 12:2; 1Pt 2:5 The Lord asks, rhetorically, whether the fast that He desires from His people is one where they humble themselves outwardly but do not amend their behavior, a fast on which they continue to oppress the lowly. In the LXX rather than a rhetorical question, the same sense is conveyed by a direct statement, "I have not chosen this fast, nor such a day for a man to afflict his soul; although you should bend down your neck as a ring, and spread under you sackcloth and ashes, neither thus shall you call a fast acceptable." In this

Greek rendering, the neck is so bent down in mock mourning that it is curved like a ring. When we go through the rituals, but our heart is not in them, and our behavior does not match our piety, God knows and will not answer. Even good works, if done with an evil heart, or to obtain something from God, can lead to a kind of works-righteousness common in medieval Catholicism (e.g. a violent and warlike Lord building a chapel or giving land to the Church in the hope that it will buy the forgiveness of his sins committed during his wars).

^j (6) Is 1:10, 1:17, 9:4, 35:5-6, 58:9, 61:1; Dt 14:29; Neh 5:10-12; Ps 15:1-5, 107:10; Ecc 7:26; Jb 36:8; Jr 34:8-11; Ezk 18:16; Mi 3:2-4, 6:6-8; Jl 2:12-14; Am 4:1, 5:21; Mt 23:23, 25:34-40; Lk 4:19; 1Tm 6:1 Rather than outward observance, the Lord calls upon his people to act with justice and free the oppressed. This is likely a reference to creditors abusing and holding in slavery their fellow Jews, and failing to return their land to them when the law required (Is 5:8; Ex 21:2-11; Lv 25:39-55; Dt 15:12-18; 1Sm 8:10-18; 1Ki 5:13-17, 21:1-3; Jr 34:8-22). In the Year of Jubilee (Lv 25:1-13, Is 61:1-2; Lk 4:16-21; Jesus likely read from the LXX of Is 61:1-2 since the Gospel text more closely resembles that than the Hebrew) slaves were to be freed and ancestral lands returned to the control of the families to whom they had been allotted. Then, as now, clever lawyers were employed to find ways to unjustly extend the period of servitude or delay the return of collateral. In the LXX there is a reference to the destruction or cancellation of unjust legal arrangements, “I have not chosen such a fast, says the Lord; but do you loose every burden of iniquity, do you untie the knots of hard bargains, set the bruised free, and cancel every unjust account?” True religion must contain a moral component and an element of social justice, of a struggle to improve the lives of the least fortunate. The reference to taking off yokes may be a reference to stop treating people like animals, that is, instruments for obtaining your own goals. If you want a fast to the Lord, it should not serve your own purposes, but should include helping others.

^k (7) Is 1:5, 9:2, 16:3-4, 30:26, 58:10; Gn 18:2-5, 19:2, 19:14, 29:14, 37:27; Dt 22:1-4; Jdg 9:2, 19:20-21; 2Sm 5:1; 2Ch 28:15; Neh 5:5; Jb 11:17, 22:7, 31:18-21; Ps 112:9; Pr 22:9, 25:21, 28:27; Ec 11:1-2; Ezk 18:7, 18:16; Dn 4:27; Mt 25:35-45; Lk 3:11, 10:26-36, 11:41, 19:8; Ac 16:15, 16:34; Rm 12:13, 12:20,-21; 2Co 9:6-10; 1Tm 5:10; Phm 1:7; Heb 13:2-3; Jas 2:15-16; 1Jn 3:17-18 The Hebrew text asks the rhetorical question indicating that a proper fast will include feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and housing the homeless in one’s own home, that is, treating them as you would one of your own family. This call to the believer is particularly poignant because Ruth, both widow () and foreigner (), was allowed to glean the fields belonging to Boaz allowing both her, and her mother who was also a widow, to survive (). Eventually Boaz, acting as Kinsman Redeemer, will marry Ruth who will become the mother of Obed () who is an ancestor of David () and of the Messiah (). The kind of fast described in this verse cannot be fulfilled by giving to charity or advocating for the “right” government policies. It requires a direct one-on-one approach to the less fortunate which recognizes them as people, fellow servants and members of the human family. For political conservatives, especially, we might think, correctly, that free market policies will, in the long run, help the most people, most quickly. But that will not get around the injunction of this verse to recognize the personal nature of both the problem and our response. The LXX again turns the rhetorical question into a statement with the same meaning, “Break your bread to the hungry, and lead the unsheltered poor to your house; if you see one naked, clothe him, and you shall not disregard the relations of your own seed.” The last phrase in both the Hebrew and the Greek might be interpreted as an injunction to take care of poor relations, or perhaps all children of Abraham who have fallen on hard times, though that would seem to be unnecessary given the injunction to take care of the poor whether they are family or not. The better interpretation of this verse would be similar to the sense of Jesus’ answer to the lawyer who asked “who is my neighbor?” (Lk 10:25-37). The Westminster Larger Catechism (1646), in response to Question 130 regarding the peculiar sins of “superiors,” that is, those in power, and relying partially on this verse, states, “THE SINS OF SUPERIORS ARE, BESIDES THE NEGLECT OF THE DUTIES REQUIRED OF THEM AN INORDINATE SEEKING OF THEMSELVES, THEIR OWN GLORY, EASE, PROFIT OR PLEASURE; COMMANDING THINGS UNLAWFUL, OR NOT IN THE POWER OF INFERIORS TO PERFORM; COUNSELING, ENCOURAGING, OR FAVORING THEM IN THAT WHICH IS EVIL; DISSUADING, DISCOURAGING, OR DISCOURTENANCING THEM IN THAT WHICH IS GOOD; CORRECTING THEM UNDULY; CARELESS EXPOSING OR LEAVING THEM TO WRONG, TEMPTATION, AND DANGER; PROVOKING THEM TO WRATH; OR ANY WAY DISHONORING THEMSELVES, OR LESSENING THEIR AUTHORITY, BY AN UNJUST, INDISCREET, RIGOROUS, OR REMISS BEHAVIOR.” The same Westminster Larger Catechism (1646), in response to Question 135 regarding the duties required by the Commandment to not murder, states, “THE DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT ARE: ALL CAREFUL STUDIES AND LAWFUL ENDEAVORS, TO PRESERVE THE LIFE OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS, BY RESISTING ALL THOUGHTS AND PURPOSES, SUBDUING ALL PASSIONS, AND AVOIDING ALL OCCASIONS, TEMPTATIONS, AND PRACTICES, WHICH TEND TO THE UNJUST TAKING AWAY THE LIFE OF ANY; BY JUST DEFENSE THEREOF AGAINST VIOLENCE; PATIENT BEARING OF THE HAND OF GOD, QUIETNESS OF MIND, CHEERFULNESS OF SPIRIT, A SOBER USE OF MEAT, DRINK, PHYSIC, SLEEP, LABOR, AND RECREATION; BY CHARITABLE THOUGHTS, LOVE, COMPASSION, MEEKNESS, GENTLENESS, KINDNESS; PEACEABLE, MILD, AND COURTEOUS SPEECHES AND BEHAVIOR, FORBEARANCE, READINESS TO BE RECONCILED, PATIENT BEARING AND FORGIVING OF INJURIES, AND REQUITING GOOD FOR EVIL; COMFORTING AND SUCCORING THE DISTRESSED, AND PROTECTING AND DEFENDING THE INNOCENT.”

^l (8) Is 1:5, 5:20, 8:20, 9:2, 15:26, 26:2, 30:26, 33:24, 47:5, 52:11-12, 57:18, 58:10-11, 60:2, 62:1; Ex 14:19; Jb 11:17; Ps 37:6, 85:13, 97:11, 112:4; Pr 4:18; Jr 30:17, 33:6; Hos 6:2-3, 14:4; Mal 4:2; Mt 13:15; Ac 10:4, 10:31-35; 2Co 1:12; 2Pt 1:10 This verse has been interpreted to decree a kind of “works righteousness” rejected by the Apostle Paul (Rm ____, 9:30-33) but the bright prospect to be derived from acting righteously might refer to the natural consequences, in this life, of acting righteously, (1) that being forgiven for past sins, your will experience a new dawn or day free from guilt over the past, (2) that by seeking the

kingdom first we will receive a speedy recovery or healing, (3) that we will have security at all times knowing that our fate is in God's hands and that He will lead us home, and (4) that you will gain a comforting relationship with God so that when we cry to Him, He will answer. This interpretation is strengthened by the reference to quick healing, that is now rather than in the next life. The reference to the Glory of the Lord is likely to pillar of cloud and fire that accompanied, guided and protected the Israelites in the Wilderness (Ex 13:21-22), again a present help rather than a future salvation. The reward offered is not salvation (justification) but, in addition to the immediate benefits to the believer, include a differentiation of rewards among the redeemed after they have been received into Heaven. The sense of verses 9-11 is much the same. These verses also remind us that in preaching the Gospel we must frequently satisfy the physical needs of people before we can tell them about the Gospel. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1530), Article III, 241-247 states, ". . . WE CONFESS THAT ETERNAL LIFE IS A REWARD, BECAUSE IT IS SOMETHING DUE ON ACCOUNT OF THE PROMISE, NOT ON ACCOUNT OF OUR MERITS. FOR THE JUSTIFICATION HAS BEEN PROMISED, WHICH WE HAVE . . . SHOWN TO BE PROPERLY A GIFT OF GOD; AND TO THIS GIFT HAS BEEN ADDED THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE, ACCORDING TO ROM. 8:30: WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, THEM HE ALSO GLORIFIED. HERE BELONGS WHAT PAUL SAYS, 2 TIM. 4:8: THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, SHALL GIVE ME. FOR THE CROWN IS DUE THE JUSTIFIED BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE. AND THIS PROMISE SAINTS SHOULD KNOW, NOT THAT THEY MAY LABOR FOR THEIR OWN PROFIT, FOR THEY OUGHT TO LABOR FOR THE GLORY OF GOD; BUT IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY NOT DESPAIR IN AFFLICTIONS, THEY SHOULD KNOW GOD'S WILL, THAT HE DESIRES TO AID, TO DELIVER, TO PROTECT THEM. JUST AS THE INHERITANCE AND ALL POSSESSIONS OF A FATHER ARE GIVEN TO THE SON, AS A RICH COMPENSATION AND REWARD FOR HIS OBEDIENCE, AND YET THE SON RECEIVES THE INHERITANCE, NOT ON ACCOUNT OF HIS MERIT, BUT BECAUSE THE FATHER, FOR THE REASON THAT HE IS HIS FATHER, WANTS HIM TO HAVE IT. THEREFORE IT IS A SUFFICIENT REASON WHY ETERNAL LIFE IS CALLED A REWARD, BECAUSE THEREBY THE TRIBULATIONS WHICH WE SUFFER, AND THE WORKS OF LOVE WHICH WE DO, ARE COMPENSATED, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT DESERVED IT. FOR THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF COMPENSATION: ONE, WHICH WE ARE OBLIGED, THE OTHER, WHICH WE ARE NOT OBLIGED, TO RENDER. [FOR EXAMPLE,] WHEN THE EMPEROR GRANTS A SERVANT A PRINCIPALITY, HE THEREWITH COMPENSATES THE SERVANT'S WORK; AND YET THE WORK IS NOT WORTH THE PRINCIPALITY, BUT THE SERVANT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT HE HAS RECEIVED A GRACIOUS LIEN. THUS GOD DOES NOT OWE US ETERNAL LIFE, STILL, WHEN HE GRANTS IT TO BELIEVERS FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, THAT IS A COMPENSATION FOR OUR SUFFERINGS AND WORKS. ALTHOUGH THE PERFECT HEAR THE MENTION OF PENALTIES AND REWARDS IN ONE WAY, AND THE WEAK HEAR IT IN ANOTHER WAY; FOR THE WEAK LABOR FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR OWN ADVANTAGE. AND YET THE PREACHING OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS IS NECESSARY. IN THE PREACHING OF PUNISHMENTS THE WRATH OF GOD IS SET FORTH, AND THEREFORE THIS PERTAINS TO THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE. IN THE PREACHING OF REWARDS, GRACE IS SET FORTH. AND JUST AS SCRIPTURE, IN THE MENTION OF GOOD WORKS, OFTEN EMBRACES FAITH, —FOR IT WISHES RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE HEART TO BE INCLUDED WITH THE FRUITS, —SO SOMETIMES IT OFFERS GRACE TOGETHER WITH OTHER REWARDS, AS IN [Is. 58:8-14], AND FREQUENTLY IN OTHER PLACES IN THE PROPHETS. WE ALSO CONFESS WHAT WE HAVE OFTEN TESTIFIED, THAT, ALTHOUGH JUSTIFICATION AND ETERNAL LIFE PERTAIN TO FAITH, NEVERTHELESS GOOD WORKS MERIT OTHER BODILY AND SPIRITUAL REWARDS WHICH ARE RENDERED BOTH IN THIS LIFE AND AFTER THIS LIFE; FOR GOD DEFERS MOST REWARDS UNTIL HE GLORIFIES SAINTS AFTER THIS LIFE, BECAUSE HE WISHES THEM IN THIS LIFE TO BE EXERCISED IN MORTIFYING THE OLD MAN AND DEGREES OF REWARDS, ACCORDING TO 1 COR. 3:8: EVERY MAN SHALL RECEIVE HIS OWN REWARD ACCORDING TO HIS OWN LABOR. FOR THE BLESSED WILL HAVE REWARD, ONE HIGHER THAN THE OTHER. THIS DIFFERENCE MERIT MAKES, ACCORDING AS IT PLEASES GOD; AND IT IS MERIT, BECAUSE THEY DO THESE GOOD WORKS WHOM GOD HAS ADOPTED AS CHILDREN AND HEIRS. FOR THUS THEY HAVE MERIT, WHICH IS THEIR OWN AND PECULIAR, AS ONE CHILD WITH RESPECT TO ANOTHER. FOR THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE GOSPEL, WHICH HAS TO DO WITH THE PROMISE OF GRACE, FREELY RECEIVES JUSTIFICATION AND QUICKENING. BUT THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW, WHICH FOLLOWS FAITH, HAS TO DO WITH THE LAW, IN WHICH A REWARD IS OFFERED AND IS DUE, NOT FREELY, BUT ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS. BUT THOSE WHO MERIT THIS ARE JUSTIFIED BEFORE THEY DO THE LAW. THEREFORE, AS PAUL SAYS, COL. 1:13; ROM. 8:17, THEY HAVE BEFORE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD'S SON, AND BEEN MADE JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST. BUT AS OFTEN AS MENTION IS MADE OF MERIT, THE ADVERSARIES IMMEDIATELY TRANSFER THE MATTER FROM OTHER REWARDS TO JUSTIFICATION, ALTHOUGH THE GOSPEL FREELY OFFERS JUSTIFICATION ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST'S MERITS AND NOT OF OUR OWN; AND THE MERITS OF CHRIST ARE COMMUNICATED TO US BY FAITH. BUT WORKS AND AFFLICTIONS MERIT, NOT JUSTIFICATION, BUT OTHER REMUNERATIONS, AS THE REWARD IS OFFERED FOR THE WORKS IN THESE PASSAGES: HE WHICH SOWETH SPARINGLY SHALL REAP ALSO SPARINGLY, AND HE WHICH SOWETH BOUNTIFULLY SHALL REAP ALSO BOUNTIFULLY, 2 COR. 9:6. HERE CLEARLY THE MEASURE OF THE REWARD IS CONNECTED WITH THE MEASURE OF THE WORK. HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER, THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND, EX. 20:12. ALSO HERE THE LAW OFFERS A REWARD TO A CERTAIN WORK. ALTHOUGH, THEREFORE, THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW MERITS A REWARD, FOR A REWARD PROPERLY PERTAINS TO THE LAW, YET WE OUGHT TO BE MINDFUL OF THE GOSPEL, WHICH FREELY OFFERS JUSTIFICATION FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. WE NEITHER OBSERVE THE LAW, NOR CAN OBSERVE IT, BEFORE WE HAVE BEEN RECONCILED TO GOD, JUSTIFIED, AND REGENERATED. NEITHER WOULD THIS FULFILLING OF THE LAW PLEASE GOD, UNLESS WE WOULD BE ACCEPTED ON ACCOUNT OF FAITH. AND BECAUSE MEN ARE ACCEPTED ON ACCOUNT OF FAITH, FOR THIS VERY REASON THE INCHOATE FULFILLING OF THE LAW PLEASES, AND HAS A REWARD IN THIS LIFE AND AFTER THIS LIFE."

^m (9) Is 1:15, 30:19, 55:6, 57:4, 58:6, 59:3-4, 59:13, 65:1, 65:12, 65:24, 66:4; Gn 27:18; 1Sm 3:4-8; Ps 12:2, 34:15-17, 37:4, 46:1, 50:15, 59:13, 66:18-19, 91:15, 118:5; Pr 6:13; Jb 8:6; Jr 29:12-13; Dan 9:20; Ezk 13:8; Am 5:7; Zec 10:2, 10:6; Mt 7:7-8; 1Jn 3:21-22 Because those who are following God's commands will feel close to Him, and understand His will, they will also be able to see God answering prayer and hear His consolation in times of trouble. The pointing of the finger may be a gesture of contempt, or an accusation (Pr 6:13). In verses 9-11, God's expectations, and promises, become much more personal. We are

asked not just to give to charity, but to literally pour ourselves out to help correct how we have enslaved others, or thought of others are mere instruments of our desires. And if that happens, there will again be light, but in a more personal way to help us understand the perplexities of our lives, because God made us, and knows everything about us. Listen to God and let him guide you. He will provide for you during the troubled times – though there will be troubled times. If we have a personal relationship with God, He will be a constant source of refreshment and restoration, especially when we trust Him most.

ⁿ (10) Is 29:18, 42:16, 58:7-8; Dt 15:7-10; Jb 11:17; Ps 37:6, 41:1, 112:4-9; Pr 11:24-25, 14:31, 28:27; Lk 18:22; Jn 8:12 Just as God provides life and breath to every living creature (Is 40:29-31, 57:15-16; _____), He desires that we would provide our fellow men and women with the things required to sustain life on this Earth. By doing so, we will be an example to others and find joy in our giving. The Hebrew translated as pour out (פָּקַד, *puq*) creates an image of sacrificial giving which is both generous, and empties the giver of his own life or soul (נֶפֶשׁ, *nephesh*), an emptiness which is to be filled by God. The sense is of giving oneself for another (Jn 15:13). Care and concern for the poor is found throughout the Scriptures (____). In the first of two widely separated examples, the Apostle James writes (Jas 2:14-17), “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” Rather than works-righteousness, St. James is telling us that simply relying upon our own faith for salvation while ignoring the needs of others, particularly the needs of other believers is, as far as the Kingdom, a dead end. If we, as believers, are to bear fruit for the Kingdom, the needs of others must be satisfied. Historically, Christianity spread so quickly in the Roman world in part because Christians cared for one another and the poor, while the cults of the ancient world benefitted most those who led those cults. In the second example (Dt 24:14-22), the Jewish people are enjoined by God to provide for the poor out of their own livelihood, “You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brethren or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns; you shall give him his hire on the day he earns it, before the sun goes down (for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it); lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it be sin in you. . . You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge; but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.” As in this verse 10, and in verse 7, of this Chapter of Isaiah, the people are told to provide for the poor out of their own property or rights (e.g., the gleanings of their own crops which would otherwise be used to feed their own families, or sold to purchase things they need), to share their own bread with them (eating with them) and giving them shelter in their own homes. This is the complete opposite of relying upon a government to do this work for us. The Jews, and we being grafted in (Rm ____), can and should do this as a matter of trusting in God for our own welfare. He promises that if we trust Him, He will provide. Second, God tells us that we should do this from a sense of gratitude because we were once slaves who He redeemed from bondage. For the Jew, this was a literal slavery of his ancestors. For Jew and Greek alike, it was a bondage to sin from which we have been freed by the blood of Messiah (Rm 6:17-21; 1Co 6:11). And finally, just as God is the source of life for all who live (____), we can take a small part in that giving of life when we provide the things needed for life to others.

^o (11) Is 27:3, 27:13, 33:16, 35:7, 41:17, 42:16, 48:17, 49:10, 51:3, 57:18, 61:11, 66:14; Jb 5:20, 6:15-20; Song 4:15; Ps 1:3, 24:1-10, 25:9, 32:8, 33:19, 34:9-10, 36:9, 37:19, 48:14, 68:6, 72:16, 73:24, 92:14, 104:28, 107:9; Pr 3:8, 11:25, 13:4, 28:25; Song 4:15; Jr 17:8, 31:12; Ezk 36:35; Hos 13:5; Jn 4:14, 7:38, 16:13; 1Th 3:11 Isaiah is likely using poetic language to describe the comfort one receives from God during times of trouble. Rather than being distant, not answering, those who are acting with hypocrisy as described in verses 1-5, a person whose actions conform to God’s desires will feel close to God and receive His comfort. A person so comforted will be able to persevere against opposition. In Romans (Rm 5:3-5) Paul writes, “More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.” According to the *Targum of Isaiah*, God will satisfy the soul of the compassionate person “in the years of drought.” The image of plentiful water is a powerful one in a dry region and is repeated often in Isaiah (Is 32:15, 35:5-7, 41:17-18, 43:20, 44:3-4, 48:21, 49:10). It is also used by the Messiah Himself (Jn 4:10-14).

^p (12) Is 30:13, 44:26-28, 49:8, 51:3, 52:9, 61:4, 65:21; 1Ki 6:37; Ezr 3:10-12, 6:14; Neh 2:5, 2:17, 4:1-7, 6:1; Jr 31:38; Ezk 36:4, 36:8-11, 36:33; Dn 9:25; Am 9:11-14 This verse may refer literally to the return of the Exiles to Jerusalem, and its rebuilding, after God has compassion for the remnant in Babylon who are now acting with justice. Or, in line with verses 8-11, the image could be of those who act according to God’s desires as restoring the nation itself rather than its physical manifestations. The *Targum of Isaiah* has the latter sense and interprets the repairing of the breach to mean restoring the right way, and the restoring of paths to mean convicting the wicked of the Law. And finally, this verse offers hope to the seed of Jacob, not only in the next world, but in this one, of an earthly restoration and gathering in the Land.

^q (13) Is 55:8, 56:1-8, 59:3, 59:13; Ex 20:8-11, 31:13-17, 35:2-3, 36:2,3; Dt 5:12-15; Neh 13:15-22; Ps 27:4, 37:4, 42:4, 84:2, 84:10, 92:1-2, 122:1; Jr 17:21-27; Rv 1:10 Isaiah ends the poem with a discussion of the Sabbath. The only permanent fast decreed in the Hebrew Scriptures is for *Yom Kippur*. But the Sabbath is a feast that was decreed for us every week, a delight rather than the affliction of a fast. Jesus tells us that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mk 2:23-28). The irony was that the fasting of a people seeking its own desires resulted in debasement, while observation of the Sabbath in the way that the Lord intended, that is by honoring it rather than seeking our own pleasures, will result in a blessing and delight in the Lord, and by being brought to the heights of the Earth and feeding on the heritage of Jacob. That is, and similarly to the preceding verses, the honoring of the Sabbath brings with it its own reward. The last phrase in this verse, literally “not speaking words” was not intended as a prohibition of speech on the Sabbath. Rather it was likely a reference to transacting business (Hos 10:4), idle talk (2Sm 19:30) or, as in the *Targum of Isaiah* and the LXX, angry or violent words. The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), citing this verse, states, “THIS SABBATH IS TO BE KEPT HOLY UNTO THE LORD WHEN MEN, AFTER A DUE PREPARING OF THEIR HEARTS, AND ORDERING OF THEIR COMMON AFFAIRS BEFOREHAND, DO NOT ONLY OBSERVE AN HOLY REST ALL THE DAY FROM THEIR OWN WORKS, WORDS, AND THOUGHTS ABOUT THEIR WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS AND RECREATIONS; BUT ALSO ARE TAKEN UP THE WHOLE TIME IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXERCISES OF HIS WORSHIP, AND IN THE DUTIES OF NECESSITY AND MERCY.” The Westminster Shorter Catechism (1646) in answer to Question 61 asking what is prohibited by the Commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy, responds as follows, “THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH THE OMISSION, OR CARELESS PERFORMANCE, OF THE DUTIES REQUIRED, AND THE PROFANING THE DAY BY IDLENESS, OR DOING THAT WHICH IS IN ITSELF SINFUL, OR BY UNNECESSARY THOUGHTS, WORDS, OR WORKS, ABOUT OUR WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS OR RECREATIONS.”

^r (14) Is 1:19-20, 33:16, 40:5, 61:10; Gn 28:12; Dt 32:13, 33:29; Jb 22:26, 27:10, 34:9; Ps 36:8, 37:4, 37:11, 105:9-11, 135:12, 136:21; Jr 3:19, 50:19; Mi 4:4; Hos 14:1-7; Hab 3:18-19; Mt 24:35; Php 4:4; 1Pt 1:8 The true Heritage of Jacob, God’s people, is to be a blessing upon the Earth (Gn 12:1-3). The Apostle Paul, in describing the Jews as descendants of Abraham writes of them (Rm 9:4-5), “They are Israelites (**Ἰσραηλῖται**, *Israēlitai*), and to them belong the sonship (**υἰοθεσία**, *huiiothesia*, lit. adoption as sons), the glory (**δόξα**, *doxa*), the covenants (**διαθήκαι**, *diathēkai*, sometimes incorrectly translated as testament or will), the giving of the law (**νομοθεσία**, *nomothesia*), the worship (**λατρεία**, *latreia*, lit. service to God), and the promises (**ἐπαγγελίαι**, *epangeliai*); to them belong the patriarchs (**πατέρες**, *pateres*, fathers, ancestors), and of their race, according to the flesh (**σάρκα**, *sarka*), is the [Messiah]. God who is over all be blessed forever.” And again (Rm 11:28-32) he writes of them, “As regards the gospel (**εὐαγγέλιον**, *euangelion*) they are enemies (**ἐχθροὶ**, *echthroï*) of God, for your sake; but as regards election (**ἐκλογήν**, *eklogēn*) they are beloved (**ἀγαπητοὶ**, *agapētoi*) for the sake of their forefathers (**πατέρες**, *pateres*). For the gifts (**χαρίσματα**, *charismata*) and the call (**κλήσις**, *klēsis*) of God are irrevocable (**ἀμεταμέλητα**, *ametamelēta*, not subject to a change of mind). Just as you were once disobedient (**ἠπειθήσατε**, *ēpeithēsate*, or rebel, unbeliever) to God but now have received mercy (**ἠλεήθητε**, *ēleēthēte*) because of their disobedience (**ἀπειθεία**, *apeitheia*, willful disobedience or unbelief), so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all.” In an immediate, literal sense, the heritage of Jacob is the Land to which they are returning. But to be restored to their true heritage would mean so much more (Gn 12:1-3; Rm 11:11-12:2).