

## Calling The Sabbath A Delight.

Isaiah 58:13,14.

Sunday evening, November 9, 2008.

### I. The connection with the preceding passage.

A. Israel had sought the Lord, even with fasting, but to no avail for the Lord would not answer them; that is He did not answer them the way they wanted Him to answer.

Yet the Lord did answer them by sending them Isaiah who was “to spare not, and to lift up his voice like a trumpet, and to tell the Lord’s people their transgression. Here we learn that the Lord does answer His people, but not always in the way of their expectations.

B. Acceptable fasting.

1. In the day of their fast their hearts were filled with greed and all manner of self-seeking leading to strife, debate, accusation and even violence.

2. Over against this the Lord sets the nature of a true fast.

It does indeed involve an abstaining from the pleasures of everyday life, but that in itself does not make it an acceptable fast. Israel was already doing that, but to no avail.

3. Biblical fasting consists not so much in an afflicting of our souls by denying them the legitimate things which our souls desire, as that it consists in a redirecting of the desires of our souls.

It is a taking away of our affections from the things of this world, (which do not require our affections, nor are they better off because of them) and an

extending

of the affections of our souls to our needy brothers and sisters (who do need our affections, and will most certainly be better off because of them.) Isa. 58:10.

4. The law teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but the gospel takes it one

step further. It teaches us to esteem others as better and more eminent than ourselves. Romans 12:10 and Phil 2:3.

This is because the Lord Jesus esteemed our need a higher priority than His own comfort and glory, and we are being conformed to His image.

### II. Calling the Sabbath a delight.

A. Thus far we have seen how evangelical fasting or Biblical fasting involves a redirecting of the affections or the loves of our soul, away from ourselves, and away from the things of this world, and toward the needs of our brothers and sisters.

B. But there is more; our needy brothers and sisters do not exist in a vacuum. They are joined to the covenant keeping God. They live in union with Him. Where they go He goes. And so when it comes to evangelical fasting, and to redirecting the affections of our souls, this must be done in relation to the Lord’s people as well as to the Lord Himself.

Fasting in relation to the Lord Himself are what these last two verses are all about. Fasting involves a taking of our rightful place before our needy brothers

and sisters, but it also involves a taking of our rightful place before the Lord.

C. Sabbath keeping is a form of fasting.

It involves a redirecting of the affections, the loves of our soul, away from “your own pleasures; your own ways, and your own words,” and toward the Lord Himself.

In Vs. 6-12 the soul learns to delight in, and to value, and to attach and apply itself to the needs of brothers and sisters. It learns to treasure them more than all the riches and pleasures of Egypt. Hebr. 11:25,26.

In Vs. 13,14 the soul learns to delight in, and to value, and to attach and apply itself to our God, and the God of our needy brothers and sisters.

In both cases it involves a radical overhaul of the value system of our soul.

It involves a dying to the value system of the old man, consisting in the values of this world and of self.

It involves a being raised with Christ to a new value system consisting in the souls of our brothers and sisters and the Lord Himself.

D. It is this transfer and overhaul of our value system that brings us into intimate fellowship with the Lord, for these are His priorities and His values.

1. The Lord called the rich young ruler to this overhaul of his value system, and so He called him into intimate fellowship with Himself. Mark 10:17-22.

2. Habakkuk, by grace, learned to transfer the affections of his soul away from the proceeds of the Fig tree and the Vine and the Olive tree, and from the crops and the flocks in the fields (the value system of an agrarian society such as Israel was), and toward the Lord, who became the fullness of his soul. Hab. 3:17-19.

3. The apostle Paul learned “to count all things loss for Christ;” that is to abandon

his old value system which consisted in “whatever things were gain to me.” Phil 3:7,8. He did so to embrace Christ and His value system. Phil 3:9-11. From that union with Christ He is able to write from his Roman prison cell: “Indeed I have all and abound, I am full...” Phil 4:18 His soul was full.

### III. The high hills and the heritage of Jacob.

A. Riding on the high hills of the earth is language taken from a conqueror riding his chariot, and occupying the vastness of a conquered country. It is language of dominion, and man was made to have dominion over the works of God’s creation

B. The heritage of Jacob your father.

This alludes to the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob’s descendants. Hebr. 11:9 shows us that the Patriarchs understood that there was a fuller meaning to the promise of the land of Canaan. That earthly land was a type of a better country; a heavenly country, for which the patriarchs waited. That was the reason they dwelt in tents and never built themselves homes. They embraced the role of being strangers and pilgrims on the earth, even in the land of promise.

Ultimately then the heritage of Jacob becomes the fullness of gospel blessings purchased for us by Christ and set before us in typical form in the Lord’s supper.