



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 58

“True Worship or Works of Faith”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of another hour of study and we ask Thy blessing upon us, as we turn to the prophecy of Isaiah. May its message again be vital and living in our lives, and may it produce fruit that will honor and glorify Jesus Christ. We ask in his name. Amen.

[Message] Returning to the 58th chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah and our subject is True Worship or the Works of Faith. The chapter before us would have been a favorite chapter of the Apostle James. James, remember, is the practical Apostle. The apostle of reality, as evidenced by the titles of the commentaries, that one reads on the Book of James. For example, I have a commentary on the Book of James that is entitled *A Belief that Behaves*, and it is written by Guy King. And in the midst of it or in the beginning of it, he tells a story about the old Negro preacher, who in the midst of one of his discourses said, “Brethren there be two sides to the gospel; there be the believing side and there be the behaving side.” And so James is the Apostle who stresses the fact the faith that we believe, is to be expressed in our obedience.” I noticed this week in a book review that I read, that someone has issued a title on a commentary on the Book of James with the

title, *Will the Real Phony, Please Stand Up*, and that is not a bad title for the Book of James either.

Isaiah 58 deals with the great problem of doctrine and duty, and guards against one of the two perversions of the right relationship between doctrine and duty. There are two perversions possible of course; one is to stress duty and to say that doctrine is unimportant. And unfortunately, there are people in the twentieth century, who believe that doctrine is unimportant. The important thing is our practical life. The important thing is our obedience. The important thing is the kind of life we live. It really does not matter what we believe, so long as the life is right.

Now you heard me and others in Believers Chapel enough to know that we stress the fact that doctrine is supremely important; that no one can possibly please God in his life, if he does not acquaint himself with the teaching of the word of God, for it is by the study of the word of God and its great doctrines that we come to understand that which pleases God. So doctrine is supremely important and it is if I were to evaluate doctrine and duty, it is not only as important as duty, but its proper place is prior to duty, and therefore when we read in the Bible that the word of God is the word of God, inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, then we are starting right. And when we read in Acts, chapter 2 that the apostles began to meet continuing in the apostles doctrine, then again we have the proper order, because we cannot please God, if we do not know what God teaches in his word.

This is why in many of the epistles of the New Testament, they have a division between doctrine and duty, and almost always the doctrine precedes the duty. For example, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is divided right in the center at the 4th chapter between doctrine and duty, it is the doctrine that is set forth in the first three chapters. It is the duty that proceeds from the doctrine that is set forth in chapters 4 through 6. So doctrine is supremely important.

We can never have too much doctrine. Well I hear a person say, he said, he said too much doctrine. He is cold and hard because he has had too much doctrine. He is not cold and hard because he has had too much doctrine. He may be cold and hard because he has not by the Holy Spirit carried it out in his life, but you can never have too much doctrine. Now that is one perversion we may stress duty to the exclusion of doctrine. It is also possible of course to stress doctrine to such an extent that we do not set forth the responsibility that we have to have our doctrine express itself in our lives.

In many of our evangelical churches, in which we have the word of God, we have men who expound the Scriptures, Sunday after Sunday. We often do not stress sufficiently that our doctrine is to be seen in our lives, and I think one of prevailing sins of evangelicals of our denominations when they are true to the word and in our independent churches true to the word. One of the prevailing things of evangelicals is that they often create the impression that they know doctrine, but that that doctrine does not have as much relationship to their practical everyday life as it should.

Now James was the apostle who believed that faith without works was dead. And I think he would have rejoiced in Isaiah, chapter 58. I think he would have read it with great glee. I think Bunion would have too. Bunion said, the soul of religion is the practical part. John Wesley said, the problem of problems is to get Christianity put into practice. And you know I think in Believers Chapel that is one of our great problems? And for those of you who are not from Believers Chapel, I would image that perhaps it is a problem in your church too. We often know a lot of the Bible, but is it true that others who look at our lives, see that doctrine incarnated in our lives?

Well let us look at Isaiah, chapter 58 now and I did not have time to put the outline on the board, so I am going to give it to you as I go along; Romans 1, The Charge to the Prophet, The Charge to the Prophet, verse 1. Now remember that Isaiah is writing in the last part of his book, from chapter 40 through chapter 66. He is writing prophecy. He is carried by the Holy Spirit into the time of the exile, when Israel is in Babylon and

against the background of that Babylonian captivity he exhorts and encourages and he also prophesied of the first and second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Now this chapter is a very practical one, and it does not so far as I know, except in its final verse have prophecy. It is a chapter that is directed to exiles, who have been exiled because of their disobedience to the word of God. They had all of the great promises of God, but they were backslidden, and as a result God sent them into the captivity. So they are in captivity because of sin. They may hide their moral wounds from themselves, but they cannot hide them from God. And so the prophet is instructed in verse 1, cry aloud, spare not, lift up Thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin. Now there is a great deal of irony in the house of Jacob because Jacob was known for his crookedness and Israel is called the House of Jacob frequently on the Old Testament and most of the time when the house of Jacob is referred to, God stresses the fact that they are sinners.

Now the Hebrew text begins with a very startling expression for a westerner, but not for an easterner. It literally says, call with the throat. Now if you have ever learned any eastern languages; and every seminary student at Dallas Seminary for example has to learn Hebrew, you know that there are full, guttural noises. I took Arabic many years ago and one of the things that impressed when I learned the alphabet in Arabic was the fact that they had many guttural sounds that I could not make.

We are inclined in our voice patterns to speak with high-pitched voices. I lived in Europe for a couple of years and I got so I can tell an American without even looking at him. If I was in a restaurant and I would hear someone speaking a higher pitched voice, even though I could not hear the actual terms, I would know that was an American because their voices were pitched higher than the Europeans, and particularly the Scots who have a lot of guttural sounds too; but in the east, they talk out of their throat.

And so when we read “call with the throat,” Isaiah is trying to stress a certain kind of speech, because they have in the East the most wonderful way of expressing

indignation, and they can express indignation in a way that no westerner can. We tend to rise high in pitch as we heap scorn upon that against which we are indignant, but the Arabs and others speaking out of the throat are able to really get over the truth that they are trying to get over when they are angry. And if you have ever seen an Arab angry and heard some of his speech, you will understand what the prophet is speaking about when he says, call with the throat, lift up Thy voice like a trumpet, show my people their transgression.

You know, there are certain types of sins that you can reason about. You can take a Christian aside or someone may take you aside, as someone has occasionally taken me aside, and there are certain kinds of sins that you can reason about; and on the basis of reasoning, you can help a person, to deliver themselves from that particular sin, but when it comes to hypocrisy that is the kind of sin that reasoning seems to have a little effect upon.

As Calvin says in his commentary on this chapter, when you are dealing with hypocrisy, what you need is “thunderbolts of words.” And that is what we have here. God is dealing with hypocrisy on the part of the Children of Israel. It is not a time to call the Messiah and have a little bit of discussion over the sin. The thing you have to do with a hypocrite is to grab him by the neck and shake him a little bit; you know, just figuratively or verbally speaking. So the charge to the prophet then is to cry out of the throat. Spare not, lift up his voice like a trumpet and show Israel their sins and transgressions.

Now secondly, why the calls of the transgression are given in verse 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. Why you would think that a nation that takes delight in approaching to God should not come under the judgment of God. But you see it is all hypocrisy. It is the hypocrisy of formal worship and faint interest in the plans and

purposes of God. And it is proper to drag hypocrites out of their lurking places when they are guilty of these sins. Otherwise Doctrine has not effect upon them at all. So you have to grab them by the neck and shake them, and that is what he is doing, and that is what I am going to try to do to you tonight, if you are hypocrite.

Now let us stop for a moment. Here is a nation, which is in captivity because of their transgression and sin. What would think that a nation in captivity because of their transgression and sin should be doing? Well of course they should be down upon their knees, pouring out their confession to God of their inequity. They should be in sackcloth and ashes. They should be fasting, asking God to deliver them from the judgment that is come upon them because of their sin, but they are going through the motions and that is all.

They are meeting. The synagogue and its practices and its instruction grew up apparently on the time of the captivity, and here they are seeking the face of the Lord, but in pure hypocrisy. They are meeting on Saturdays. They are engaging in the feasts that they were required to engage in; and furthermore they are exercising themselves in the fast; the fast of the Day of the Tammuz. That was the only one required by law by the way, but they had added other fasts, and some of them apparently were added during this time of captivity; and so they were going through the motions, but they really did not mean anything.

Do you think that has any practical application to us today? Do you think it has any application when a man stands on a pulpit and preaches the word of God, and looks out over the audience and they are four people sleeping on the right side, and six people sleeping on the left, and four of them are looking out of the window and when they leave, you that that word has had effect whatsoever upon them because you hear in a roundabout way that they have been carrying practices in business that are contrary to the teaching of the word of God. Do you think it has any application in the twentieth century? Do you think it might have an application to the church, which names the name

of Jesus Christ? Well I think it does. One of the saddest things of course about all of us is we so often can get into a pattern of religious practice and carry it all out.

We are in church on Sunday morning for the Sunday school class. We may even teach our children in the Sunday school. We attend the morning service. We attend the youth meetings in the afternoon or the meeting for the adults and the training session, and at night we are in the church, and then on Wednesday night, and furthermore we engage to another programs like visitation and other things. We are very religious and very involved and we are very good, so we think, but our heart is far from the Lord.

Now I ask you a personal question. When was the last time, be honest with me now, when was the last time that you got down upon your knees by yourself with an open Bible, and studied the Scriptures, and offered some prayers to God from the heart? When was the last time? I was not talking about sitting down at the table and saying, Oh Father; we thank Thee for this food in Jesus name. Amen.” When did you. These scathing words that the prophet brings forth from his throat are words addressed to us, and they have a tremendous message to us. Let us move on.

Now in verse 3, the first part of the verse, we have the complete of God’s neglect, Romans 3. You would think that people when they are faced with the fact that they have been hypocritical would acknowledge it, but no. Wherefore have we fasted and say Thee and Thou see us not. In other words, swelled with pride, they ventured to murmur at God. Do we vex ourselves with all of these religious services in vain? Is it that God is not satisfied with all of these things that we do? Is it possible that we should attend church on Sunday morning twice and then again Sunday night and then the prayer meeting, and then be involved in all of the programs of the church, and God should not be satisfied with these? What kind of a person is God? We have given up all of our time for him and he is not satisfied. Well this is exactly what they were saying. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou see us not. God does not even see us when we fast, and so they complain that God does not accept them in their hypocrisy.

And in the middle of verse 3, we have the counter complaint of the Lord. Romans 4, verse 3B through the fourth verse. Listen to what God says, “Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors.” In other words, in the midst of your fasting, in the midst of that day in which you are supposed to draw away and seek the Lord, in that very day, which you have said is a fast day, you are really carrying on business as usual, business as usual. It does not really mean a thing. Isn't it a terrible thing that right in the midst of religious activity, so called, our heart can be so far from it, that it is just as if we had no spirituality whatsoever. We are just as dead as a stick spiritually. That is what he is saying. Right in the midst of their fasts. What was the fast day supposed to be? Why do people draw off at a time and do not eat and do not drink? Why do they do this? Well historically, fasting was done in order that one might be occupied more completely with God.

In the beginning of this series of messages, I illustrated this by an experience that I had at the seminary with a very close friend. He was a very godly young man, who came to the seminary, a very intelligent young man, a Phi Beta Kappa from one of our universities in the Middle West, and he and I were in the same class. In fact I do not think I am bragging to say we were about the two best students in the Hebrew class. There were not many in the class in those days. I do not want you to get the wrong idea, but we were about the two best students and so we got pretty close to one another and I was living here without my wife; at that time, she was in Birmingham, Alabama; and I was living in a dorm and so we became very close, the two of us, and I will never forget that one day I noticed that he had not attended class and he did not attend class the next day, but I saw him the third day, and I said, “Howard, where have you been?” He said, “Well Lewis, I have been fasting.” And I looked at him as if he was a man from the Old Testament. I never heard of anybody in New Testament times fasting. I have never



known of any, I have never known of any Christian or any person for that matter who fasted.

Now grant it, I had not had much Christian experience when I came to the seminary, so I asked him to explain himself. He said, well I have been under a great burden. I am not sure what God wants to me to do for my life. And I just felt that I really ought to see his face, and so for the past two days I have been in my room and I have not been eating anything, and I have been on my knees the whole time seeking to find God’s will with regard to the future, and he said, I think that God has spoken to me and told me exactly what I should do. And for many years after that he was one of the most effective workers of the Wycliffe Bible Translation Society. And it was because he fasted, drew off some of the face of God in genuine sincerity and found the will of God for him. Fasting is a New Testament practice.

In 2 Corinthians, chapter 6 and verse 5, the Apostle Paul speaks of the fact that he fasted and fasted more than once. For we read in the 5th verse, as he speaks of his experience, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings. Fastings; it is perfectly all right for a Christian to fast, perfectly all right for him to be so concerned about God’s will for his life that he gets off by himself, away from his wife, away from his family, away from his friends, gets down upon his knees and asks God to speak to his heart. But what a terrible thing it is, when a man goes through the motions of fasting and he really is not giving God any part of his life at all. Suppose I should announce to you that I am fasting, but I should not really seek the face of God at all. I should really carry on business as usual. What a hypocrite.

And that is the kind of thing that God speaks about here. He says, behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate. Now that may mean that in the midst of your fasting, you become more and more irritable; most commentators say that. After all, if you are not eating anything and you are not drinking anything, there is a tendency to get a little bit of irritation and

particularly if you are not seeking the face of God at all. So they not only were hypocrites, but they were becoming disagreeable in their hypocrisy. You shall not fast as you do this to make your voice to be heard on high.

Now roman 5, the character of true fasting, verse 5,

“Is it such a feast that I have chosen? Do you think that I am satisfied, if you announce to everyone that you are fasting, that you are seeking the face of the Lord, but you carry on business as usual and do you think I am pleased with that, God 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?”

Do you know anything about bulrushes? You know Isaiah, he is beautiful in his use of figures. Bulrushes stand straight, but they are the easiest of all rushes I suppose to fall over, and so you can see these people fasting. They are just going around all bent over like this, you know, in their hypocrisy of their fasting. They are so religious. They are in a sense; outwardly they are in sackcloth and ashes, but inwardly they are carrying on business as usual. They are just like a bulrush that has been knocked over, to spread sackcloth and ashes under him. Wilt Thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? No. Let us see what God’s fasting is?

Someone has said, a long time ago, not eating is a natural fast, but abstaining from sin is a spiritual fast. One of them requires physical self denial. The other requires spiritual self denial. Now notice the kind of fast that God is pleased with. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, 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?

In other words, the fast that God takes pleasure in, is the fast that expresses itself

in practical good works. Does that offend you as a Christian? Does it offend you to realize that your responsibility as a Christian is to be wholeheartedly exercised in the behalf of other Christians? Does that offend you? If that offends you, it is because you do not understand the relationship that we bear to one another in the body of Christ. If it offends you to be told that your responsibility is not only to your family, but to the family of God, it is because you do not understand the character of the body of Christ. If someone should come in Believers Chapel, and should find Jesus Christ as Savior and should be in need, what should we do? Should we say, too bad? I am sorry. I will pray for you. No, much more than that, dear friends.

Our responsibility as a Christian is to minister to our brother in Christ. Would you not do that for your own son? Would you not do that for your daughter? Would you not do that for members of your family? Well what relationship is closer than the membership in the body of Christ? When our Lord’s own family came to him and they said, your mother and your father and your brethren and your sisters are outside, what did he say? He looked around about upon those who had put their trust in him, and he said these are my father, these are my mother, and these are my brethren. Our Lord recognized that his relationship to his disciples was greater than his relationship to his own mother.

And so I say to you my dear Christian friends, that your relationship to a member of the body of Christ is deeper than your relationship to members of your own family. That is the teaching of God’s word. Does it shock you? Does it grab you by the neck and shake you a little? Well it should, because there are few of us who are not guilty of great hypocrisy in spiritual things.

You would be surprised what God would do through us, if these things should really be something to us. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you.” That commandment had not been given I know in the Old Testament, but it was anticipated by this. Now our Lord is not saying as many of our preachers who are full of a social gospel today says, our Lord is not saying that the church

should have a poverty program for those who are in the community. He is not saying that. There is not one thing in the Old Testament so far as I know that states that the church’s responsibility is to the outsider first. He should have a responsibility of course to all men, but his first responsibility is to the church, which is the body of Christ. You often hear it said today by men who are preaching a social gospel only that in the Old Testament the prophets involve themselves in social problems and they involve themselves in political problems and they all fail to realize that those social problems and those political problems were problems within the nation Israel, which were a theocratic people. It was a company of people who belonged to God and had special relationship to him. Those things apply to relationship in the church.

There was politics in Israel for Israel had a king, and there were social problems in Israel for Israel was a people. Those texts do not apply to the world. They apply to Israel. I do say this that we as Christian believers have a responsibility to the church of God, to the family of God, and just as Israel had a responsibility to Israel, so we have a responsibility to the church; and that means when the poorest member of the body of Christ is in need, we have a responsibility to them. This is the kind of fast that God takes pleasure in. Fasting means self denial. In order to satisfy the needs of others, it may mean self denial for us. I think it would be a wonderful thing if in our assembly, if in our church we should feel towards the saints of God, even those that we do not like personally. We should feel that they were members of our family and as some members of our family we get a little irritated with at time do not we, but we recognize the responsibility to them, and then we learn to love them, for Christ loved them. So what we need is not a poverty program. We need a Christian poverty program, directed to Christians.

Well, now we come to VI, the consequences of obedience. What shall happen when we do obey, when we do carry out these things that Isaiah is in the Old Testament addressing to Israel and which have their counterparts in the New Testament, in the new

commandment? The hypocrite said God is a kind of person who does not seem to be able to be satisfied, for we fast and he does not seem to be pleased with us, but he is pleased when we fast from the inner man. Notice, he says in the 8th verse, “In the night, then shall Thy light break forth as the morning.” Calvin says, “Light is the sign of prosperity, just as darkness is the sign of adversity, although they say light really signifies peace.” What it signifies is not too important for us, providing we recognize that it is the blessing of God. Then shall Thy light break forth as the morning, and Thine health shall spring forth speedily, so we shall have prosperity. Someone has said, “Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament and adversity is blessing of the New.” I am inclined to believe that, at least from practice from my own life.

In the Old Testament, God did often signify his pleasure by the fact that he blessed Abraham with great possessions. Many of the great saints of the Old Testament have the showers of blessings from God materially poured out upon them. How often when I am out by myself, traveling out in the country, I would tune down to that little station down that comes over from the over the border from Mexico. I think it is called XEG or something like that and I listen to this long string of Pentecostal preachers, looking of illustrations, and almost always you will find there will be one of them that will get on the air with his line and it is a line, and it is said this: Why you are so poor? It is because you do not believe the things that we preach. If you believe the things that we preached, you would be rich. Do you think that God likes to have poor children? Do you think God wants you to drive around in an old broken down car when you can have a nice new car? Due you think God’s children should drive around in an old car like that? Do you think that God wants you to live in that old shack you live in, when you could be living in a great big house, a luxurious place? Do not God’s children live in prosperity? Do you think God is pleased to see you dwelling in such adversity? Does he not get glory if you dwell in a big house and ride in a big car and have a very profitable business? Well of course God is glorified when that happens. And all you need to do is to put your

hand on that radio and pray and you will get healed and you will enjoy all of these blessings, and be sure to send me a good offering. This is the line.

And of course you do see this in the Old Testament, God did bless that way, but in the New Testament he has promised us no such blessings. He has not promised us that we should be wealthy. He has promised us that we should enjoy the blessing of God in our material circumstances, whether they be prosperity or adversity. If he should give us prosperity, he has only given us prosperity that that money might be used for his glory. What you have, you have as a trust from him. What you do not have is his will, and you should seek his face within it. He has promised to take care of you. So when you fast from within the heart, when you really seek the face of the Lord in reality without hypocrisy, you shall have prosperity.

In the Old Testament, you shall have the sense of God’s hand upon you. I think in my own experience there have often been times when I did not have a penny, and there were some days when I did not have a penny; and I think probably if I had totaled up as an accountant, in recent days there were days when I did not have a penny either but I did not realize it; but there were days in which I did not have anything that my heart was much fresher with the blessing of God that at times when I had satisfaction materially. And then Thine health shall spring forth speedily. Notice, and Thy righteousness shall go before Thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be Thy rear ward.

Now those of you who have been following along in Isaiah, you will remember that when we were expounding chapter 52 and verse 12, I took out a little bit of time to talk about this and here is this figure again, and so since Isaiah repeats it, I am going to repeat it. Look back at chapter 52, verse 12, for ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel shall be your rear ward. And do you remember what Isaiah refers to by this expression. The God of Israel or the Lord will go before you and the God of Israel shall be your rear ward.

What was he referring to? Well he was referring to, yes, he was referring to their Exodus from Egypt when Israel went out from Egypt with the Lord before them and the Lord behind them. And you remember that they came to the Red Sea and the Lord as the Pillar of Cloud and Pillar of Fire hovered over them and Israel looked back and they saw the Egyptians coming. And so the God, who had led them out, remember, went to the rear and stood between them and the Egyptians, in order to protect the Israelites from the on rushing Egyptians. The God who went before them also was their rear guard, their reward. And what a beautiful picture it is and finally the next day, God opened up the Red Sea and he went before them through the Red Sea so that they went through the Red Sea dry shod and then he closed up the Red Sea upon pharaoh and his hosts and they were all destroyed. The God of Israel shall go before you, the God of Israel shall be your rear ward.

And do you remember the Lord Jesus in the 10th chapter of the Gospel of John speaks about himself as the Great Shepherd and he says that he is the Shepherd and he puts forth this sheep and he goes before them. And not only does he go before them, but he also preserves them and protects them. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck their mouth of my hand. Now this text says, Thy righteousness shall go before Thee. What is our righteousness? Well now let us turn over to Jeremiah, chapter 23. Here is a great text that I have not referred to in a good while. Jeremiah, chapter 23 and verse 5 and verse 6,

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David; (this is the Old Testament. It is Isaiah, Jeremiah.) Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. (Who is that king? The Lord Jesus.) In his days Judah

shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah save Canaan, the Lord our righteousness.”

Who is Thy righteousness? The Lord Jesus. He is our righteousness. He at the right hand of Jehovah is our righteousness. Why is he our righteousness? Because he is our representative. He is our standing before God. We do not stand in ourselves. We stand in him. What he has done, he has done as the representative man for us. He has borne the judgment of God. He has buried for us. He has been raised for us. He has ceded the right hand of God for us, and we are seated there in him. He is our righteousness. He is our acceptance before God. He is all that God desires that we be, for us.

So when we read here, Thy righteousness shall go before Thee. He is talking about a person and that is evident from the remainder of the clauses. The glory of the Lord shall be Thy rear ward. And so it God before us and it is God behind us. It is justification and it is glorification. You know, there is a wonderful text too back in the Psalms, Psalm 84, and verse 11. I like this verse. We read, “For the Lord God is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory.” I once saw a commentary on Romans 5, 6, 7 and 8 or the first 8 chapters of Romans, which was entitled this, from guilt through grace to glory. Our Lord will give grace and he will give glory. He will give justification and he will give glorification. Justification goes before us, glorification shall be our rear ward. In other words the history of a Christian is comprehended in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. We enjoy the justification. We are experiencing the sanctification that flows from his death and we have before us, the wonderful prospect of glorification. Our future is all set forth in the word of God and we experience these things, as we really seek his face.

Now then he goes on to say, verse 9, then shalt Thou call, and the Lord shall answer. Who does not want to have an answered prayer? Who does not want to feel



that when you turn your heart to God, he hears your voice? Well Isaiah seems to plainly say that, if we are hypocritical in our lives, we cannot expect God to hear our prayers.

Now there are wonderful aspects to this that we haven’t time to enter into, but I think it is plainly taught in the word of God that a life lived out of fellowship of God is a hindrance to spiritual growth and fruitfulness; and that is what is stated here, then shalt Thou call; when you are in fellowship; then shalt Thou call and the Lord shall answer. Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, “Here I am.” It is a wonderful thing to have our Lord for a friend. It is a terrible to happen for an enemy.

Now we as Christian of course cannot have him ultimately as an enemy, but we can have him displeased with us; and if it is a wonderful thing for the Lord to be pleased with us, it is not a very good thing for the Lord to be displeased with us. We belong to his family and a family has discipline. And God has discipline. He has a little way of expressing his displeasure that the Lord suffer. The Corinthians had been drinking the wine and were getting drunk, and so he said for this cause some are weak, some are sickly, some sleep; all from the judgments of God come upon because we are at a fellowship with him. Oh now, let me hasten to say, let me hasten to say this that often the trials and experiences of life come upon us, not because we are out of fellowship, but because we are in fellowship, and he wishes us to grow. Do not think that some calamity has fallen upon you that that is the sign of God’s displeasure, but it might be. It may be however that he wants to lift you to a higher plane of life and that is why it has come.

Now the final part of the chapter and our time is up seventhly contains further conditions and consequences, verse 9B through verse 14, and in summary what God says here is the right attitude is to be followed by the right act; and if the right attitude is followed by the right kinds of acts, we shall have certain blessings, and let us read them. If Thou take away from the midst of Thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger --by the way, the ancients when they wanted to express their displeasure with someone else, they

poked their finger at them, and it was usually a middle finger. And that is what is referred to here,

“The putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity, and if Thou draw out Thy soul to the hungry (he is not talking just about acts, he is talking about the attitude of heart behind the act). If Thou draw out Thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall Thy light rise in obscurity, joy and prosperity, and Thy darkness be as the noon day, and the Lord shall guide Thee continually, and satisfy Thy soul in drought. He shall give the guidance, even in drought and need.”

Paul said he had learned in whatsoever state he was therein to be content. And when we are in fellowship with him, he will guide us. We read,

“And Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water.” (That is, a watered garden receives blessing from the water and a spring bubbles up with the water from itself. And he says, that we shall be like a watered garden, God is going to give us blessing, but at the same time is going through his mighty power to create within us such and experience that we become a spring of blessing to others. It is like the woman to whom Jesus said that if you believe in me, out of your belly there shall come a spring of water of life. Then he says, “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.” He is talking about the Babylonian exiles directly, but of all who seek to return to God in his word. When a man returns to God and to his word, he is called the restorer of paths to dwell in.

And do you know in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there is a great need to return to the Bible. That was the *raison d’etre* of Believers Chapel. That was what we tried to do seven years ago, return to the word of God for the local church. We should return not only to the

doctrines of soteriology and his great saving work, not only to the doctrines of bibliology, not only to the doctrines of theology proper, not only to the doctrines of pneumatology, not only to the doctrines of eschatology, but we should return to the doctrines of ecclesiology, and we should meet as a church as the New Testament sets forth, but I am not so confused as to think that it is not possible for us to return even more to the word. There are probably ways in which we have not yet found truth of God’s word as we might.

And there should always be the desire to go back to the Scriptures, back to the Scriptures, judge everything by the Scriptures; not by the creed but by the Scriptures always; everything under the judgment of the scriptures; and then as we earnestly, sincerely without hypocrisy seek the face of God, we should be known as the restorer of paths to dwellion, just as those who returned to Jerusalem sought to build again the city and the temple that had been destroyed through their disobedience.

And the final two verses have to do with the Sabbath and further blessings. He says,

“If Thou turn away Thy foot from the Sabbath, that is from misusing it; from doing Thy pleasure on my Holy Day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing Thine own ways, nor finding Thine own pleasure, nor speaking Thine own words, then shalt Thou delight Thyself in the Lord.”

Would not it be wonderful to live in a continual occupation with God, the Sabbath Day? The Sabbath was the day of rest. It was Saturday, the seventh day. If you are a Sabbatarian, you should observe it on Saturday, not Sunday. Sunday is the Lord’s Day. But you know the Christian church fell into the trap of regarding the Lord’s Day as a day in which they should not do things. Is not that so typical of the old nature? Instead of really being all for God, we will not do this and we will not do that, and we will keep our

stores closed. We will not buy anything on Sunday. We will not read the newspaper.

When I was in Scotland, believe it or not, this happened with somebody in an evangelical church, I was invited into his home. They still have a lot of the old Sabbath practices, for example, the Christians should not get the Sunday paper. My goodness what would you do if you did not get the Sunday paper and could not discover the scores for Saturday’s football games? It is a calamity. So they did not get the newspaper over there.

Well I was invited into this wonderful Christian. He is a really wonderful Christian, and he knew it was hypocrisy and he knew that his friends felt that he should not get that Sunday paper, and so he invited me out to dinner, Sunday dinner with him after I had preached in that little chapel; and when I came home, I said, where is the Sunday paper? He said, “Don’t tell anybody,” and then he walked over to the chair in the living room, the big chair; pulled up the cushion and pulled out from another cushion the Sunday paper with a big smile on his face, and he said here it is, but do not tell any of the brethren. [Laughter]

Now he knew of course it was just a hypocrisy, but you see that is way we have treated the Sabbath Day. In the Old Testament the Sabbath Day was not a day, not to do things; it was not simply a day of rest, it was a day of occupation with the Lord; that was what it should be. Now we do not have any Sabbath Days, do you know why? Because every day is a Sabbath Day. Everyday is the day for a whole-hearted occupation with the Lord; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Sunday is the day in which we come to get fed in the word of God, to be strengthened so that through the rest of the week we can have six days of occupations with the Lord in the strength of that seventh day. Do you believe that? That is what the Bible teaches.

Read Romans, chapter 14. And I said, I was going to stop, and I am not stopping at all. And I will cause Thee to ride upon the high places of the earth. They will return to their land. And feed Thee with the heritage of Jacob Thy father. That was the

Promised Land. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. All the word agrees; James, Paul, Isaiah, our Lord, faith without works is dead.

May I close by just reading two passages, two verses from 1 John, chapter 3, verse 17 and 18; and you will recognize immediately that the truth we have been talking about tonight have their application in the new. Listen, 1 John 3, 17 and 18,

“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

May God help us to do that, for Jesus' sake.

[Prayer] Let us bow in prayer. “Father, we thank Thee for Thy work, and we commit ourselves to Thee, and we pray that by the grace of God Thou will forgive us for our failures, for our transgressions, for our sins, for our hypocrisy; and we pray oh God that by Thy grace in Believers Chapel and in our churches represented here there may be a practical fulfillment of the works of faith to the glory of Thy name. We pray in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen.”