

Isaiah 58

from Doug Perry, www.FellowshipOfTheMartyrs.com , August 7, 2006

God does not change. What irritated Him then, still irritates Him now. What pleased and honored Him then, still pleases and honors Him now. These If/Then statements are guarantees! IF you do these things, then He WILL do what He said He would do – sooner or later, one way or the other. He reserves the right to manifest it in whatever way He wants, but He WILL do it.

It's equational. Like math. Just insert the quantity.

IF you do Behavior X **THEN** Consequence Y will result. Quantity N is the only variable.

$$BX(N) = CY(N)$$

Positive Behavior = Positive Consequence OR Negative Behavior = Negative Consequence

Get it? Doesn't even require faith. It's just a guarantee from God. Now, it may not manifest like you expect or when you expect, but it WILL happen because God's promises are good. He is faithful and just.

So here we go. Let's look at the guarantees.

Isaiah 58

1 “Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins.

I think He's serious about this. I guess we're supposed to point out the problem as loudly as possible. This is my personal attempt to fulfill this command.

2 For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.

So, it's not for lack of praying or evidently a desire to know what God wants. They are a whole nation that is praying and seems eager. Is it possible that our churches in America seem eager but they're off track? Could it be?

3 ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?’

They don't seem to be getting through. God doesn't seem to be answering them very much or at all. They are praying every day, they are even fasting – and yet it doesn't seem like they are satisfied with God's response to them.

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

4 Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.

Here we get God's response to them. They are fasting, but they're exploiting people – like volunteers in the churches? Or illegal alien workers? Or sweatshop workers and child and prison labor in other countries so we can buy stuff cheap at Walmart? Could be. Oh, yeah, and we're fasting, but it always ends in quarreling and strife and striking each other. Could that be like church splits and power struggles and denominational divisions? Could that be like dividing the Body of Christ up into tiny little pieces because we don't want to play nice with others? Yeah, that could be it. Maybe we're ignoring the starving Brethren in other countries so we can have our fancy new building? That would do it. Evidently fasting and praying like we've been doing and still being selfish stinkers just isn't getting our prayers through to God. Evidently He's not paying too much attention to our petitions when we aren't acting like Jesus.

5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

So, thankfully, here we get to hear Him tell us what He wanted all along. Now all we have to do is implement it and we'll be fine. He didn't want a show. He didn't want sackcloth and ashes when our hearts were really unrepentant and it was just for effect. If we're quarreling and striking each other, how much fear of the Lord do we really have? How seriously should He take our fast?

6 “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?”

OK, we need to loose the chains of injustice, untie the yokes, set the oppressed free and break every yoke. What's that mean? Well, there are three dimensions – Body, Soul and Spirit. We need to settle issues of physical injustice and fight for those who oppressed (like the child and prison laborers and sweat shops) and we need to set them free and then we need to break the yokes so they can't be applied to anyone else. For the Soul we need to break the chains that continue to bind people to legalism and the doctrinal laws of Man, we need to untie them from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil so they can go eat from the Tree of Life. Then we need to break the yoke permanently so they won't get trapped again. This is primarily in the area of the mind – of teaching and training and discipleship. For the Spirit, we need to identify spiritual oppression that have trespassed into the lives of Christians, we need to release them from those yokes, set them free, teach them to walk it out and keep the yoke broken. This means deliverance from demonic strongholds, addictions, lusts, fears, abuses and others. The more we do this, on all three levels, the more we fulfill this instruction of the Lord. If we leave out one of the three, we are not in full compliance.

7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Again, three levels. We need to feed and shelter and clothe and care for our own. For the Soul, we need to share the true meat of the Gospel of Life, give them to eat and to drink, we need to cover them and clothe them in protective armor and the white robes that are their birthright. We need to especially minister to the brethren in need. (Romans 12). In the Spirit, we need to feed them from what we have. We need to pour ourselves out and sacrificially offer anything we have in the Spirit from the abounding riches of our inheritance to meet the needs of those who are poor in spirit. We especially need to make sure that we have bandaged, healed and empowered the saints in need. He promises that if you sacrifice for His Kingdom, He will replace it abundantly in this life and in the next. If you give sacrificially, that's so much like Jesus, He will always give you more. So long as you pour yourself out, He'll keep filling you and giving you a bigger cup of Jesus.

8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

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

So here we see the first of the consequences. IF you do those behaviors in verses 6 and 7, THEN your light will break forth like the dawn and YOUR OWN healing will quickly appear, your righteousness will go before you (because you're obeying God) and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard AND when you call He will answer and say, “Here am I.” Now that's cool! At the beginning of the chapter, they are complaining because they don't seem to be getting through to the throne. Now He says that if you'll just do this stuff, He will ALWAYS answer you and be present. How about that? And all we had to do was stop making it about ourselves and care for other people. Who knew?

“IF you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,

Yeah, boy, that'd be nice, wouldn't it? So, we have to lift the yokes of oppression (Body, Soul, and

Spirit). Presumably we have to do it to ourselves as well, because there's no way to stop the pointing finger and malicious talk as long we still have things oppressing us. (And we wouldn't be pointing fingers and talking maliciously UNLESS we had things oppressing us, so don't think you don't. Things like jealousy, control, envy, pride, fear, bitterness – they're all strongholds of the enemy.) You can be sure that our light WILL NOT arise so long as we're pointing fingers and talking maliciously about each other! Why don't more miracles happen in America? Maybe because we're the most finger-pointing, malicious-talking branch of the church on the planet. Could be. Why should God show up and be our rear guard and answer our call given what stinkers we are?

10 and IF you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, THEN your light will rise in the darkness, and THEN your night will become like the noonday.

What do you think “spend yourselves” means? That seems like it means “all the way spent.” Seems practically sacrificial! Probably substantially more than the 2% that Americans average in giving to church and charity. Not to mention that less than 5% of the income of the churches is spent on the hungry and needy. The vast majority of the money is spent on ourselves, our own programs and buildings and staffs. Anyway, so IF we spend ourselves – really spend ourselves – on the hungry (Body, Soul and Spirit) and meet the needs of the oppressed (Body, Soul and Spirit), THEN our light will rise in the darkness and our night will be like noonday. That's how bright we will be! Even in the middle of the night it will be like noonday. Even in the midst of gross darkness (like America), the shadows will flee from the glory of God shining through us and reflecting off of us. And all we had to do was stop making it about ourselves. Wow. It's all so simple – how did we squirrel it up this badly?

Actually this is a compound formula – “IF and IF/THEN and THEN” but the formula works the same.

11 The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

This is a continuation of the THEN/THEN. He promises to guide your steps (Prov. 3:5-6). He promises to satisfy your needs and to make you strong. He promises to bring fruit to your garden. That means water and that means light will come to grow our harvest. He says rivers of living water will flow up from inside us and will never be quenched – even though we're in a sun-scorched land.

12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

More positive consequences from careful devotion and obedience. We get to rebuild on the ancient foundations – which is Jesus. We get to stand in the gap and rebuild the ancient walls – the defenses and protections to the people inside (which are currently clearing not working). And we get to restore streets with dwellings. People will come home and be safe. People will flourish inside the walls and be protected again. Note that this is about a city. He wants us rebuilding and restoring the walls of protection around our cities.

13 “IF you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, IF you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and IF you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,

That means resting when He tells us to rest. It also means that we honor the Sabbath (and Jesus, who is our Sabbath Rest) by NOT going our own way and obeying Him implicitly. We bring all these blessings on us by NOT doing as we please and speaking idle words. What are idle words? For sure that malicious talk stuff from v.9, but also ANYTHING that comes out of our mouth that JESUS didn't put there.

14 THEN you will find your joy in the Lord, and I WILL cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”

The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Amen!